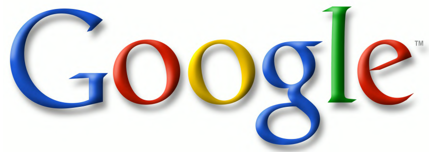

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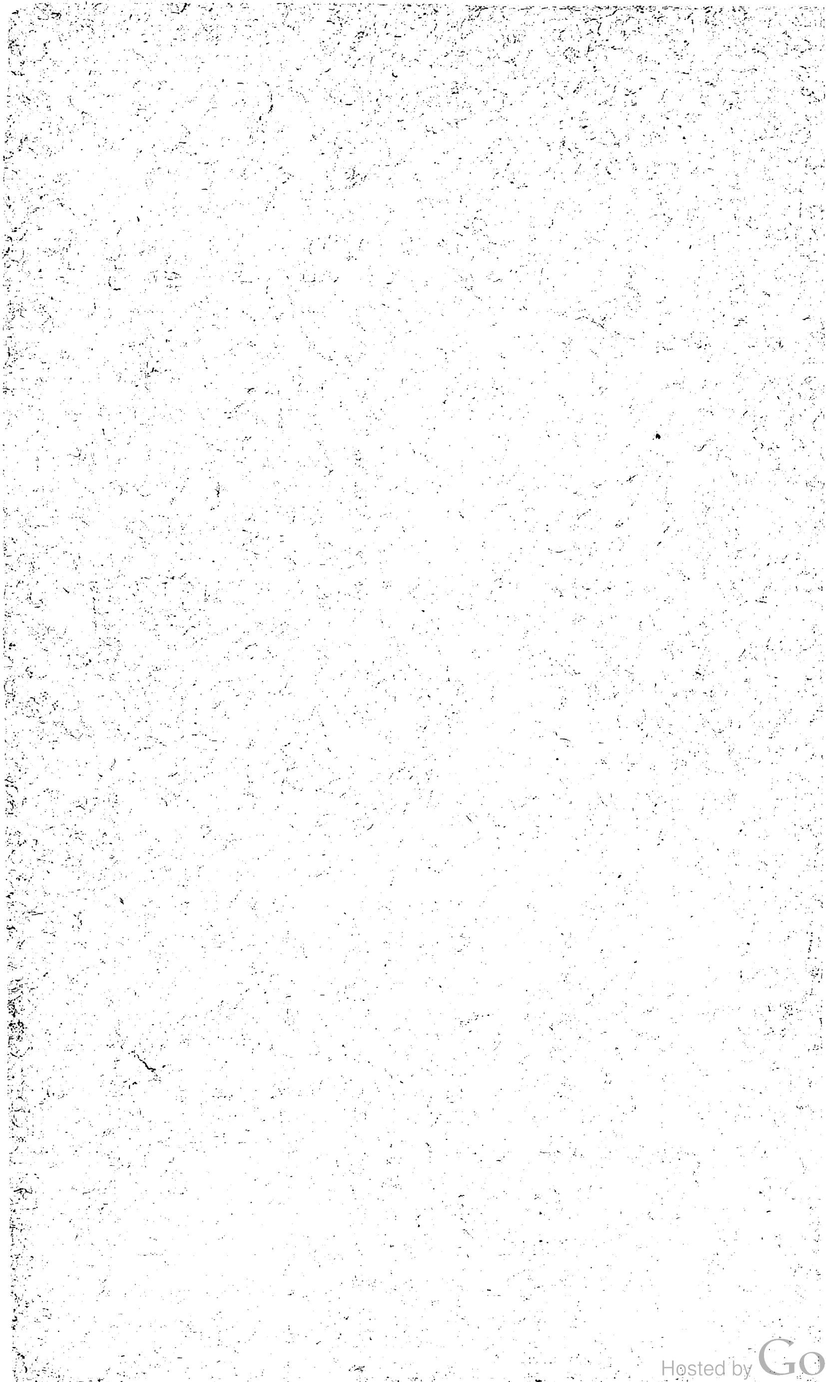

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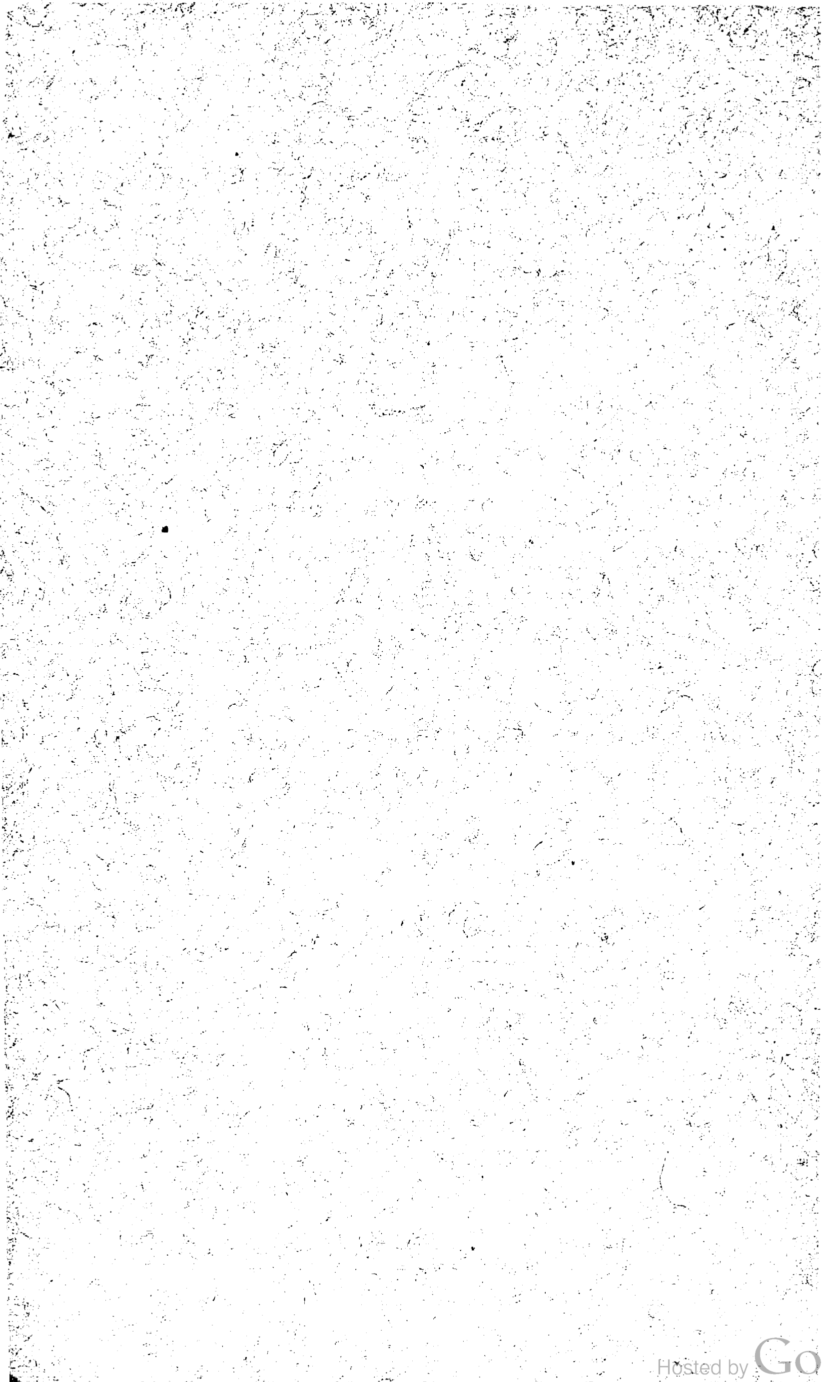

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OUR VILLAGE:

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SKETCHES OF

RURAL CHARACTER AND SCENERY.

BY

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

NEW EDITION.

SECOND SERIES.

LONDON:
BELL & DALDY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.
1870.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMISTRESS	1
FANNY'S FAIRINGS	13
WHITSUN-EVE	18
JESSY LUCAS	23
A COUNTRY BARBER	31
OUR MAYING	40
AN ADMIRAL ON SHORE	49
HAY-CARRYING	64
THE QUEEN OF THE MEADOW	76
DORA CRESWELL	85
THE BIRD-CATCHER	93
MY GODMOTHERS	101
THE MOLE-CATCHER	116
MADEMOISELLE THERÈSE	122
LOST AND FOUND	127
INTRODUCTORY LETTER [TO FOURTH SERIES]	134
LOST AND WON	142
CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE:—	
AMY LLOYD	150
THE MAGPIES	155
THE ROBINS	161
HARRY LEWINGTON	166
PRIDE SHALL HAVE A FALL	170
THE TWO DOLLS	175
THE FOSTER-MOTHER	180
YOUNG MASTER BEN	185

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Patty's new Hat	192
Cottage Names	197
Little Miss Wren	204
Going to the Races	210
The China Jug	219
Louisa	228
The Election	237
A Castle in the Air	244
The two Sisters	251
Rosedale	259
Hopping Bob	272
A Visit to Richmond	283
Ghost Stories	291
Matthew Shore	308
Introduction [to the fifth series]	316
The Incendiary	318
Christmas Amusements :—	
No. I.	331
No. II.	340
No. III.	362
No. IV.	377
No. V.	392
The Rat-Catcher	408
The Cousins	417
The lost Keys, or A Day of Distress	427
The residuary Legatee	435
The Runaway	443
Old Master Green	451
The freshwater Fisherman	459
The Haymakers	469
The Fisherman in his Married State	480
Sea-side Recollections	490
A Moonlight Adventure	497

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OUR VILLAGE.

THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMISTRESS.

WOMEN, fortunately perhaps for their happiness and their virtue, have, as compared with men, so few opportunities of acquiring permanent distinction, that it is rare to find a female, unconnected with literature or with history, whose name is remembered after her monument is defaced, and the brass on her coffin-lid corroded. Such, however, was the case with Dame Eleanor, the widow of Sir Richard Lacy, whose name, at the end of three centuries, continued to be as freshly and as frequently spoken, as "familiar" a "household word," in the little village of Aberleigh, as if she had flourished there yesterday. Her memory was embalmed by a deed of charity and of goodness. She had founded and endowed a girls' school for "the instruction" (to use the words of the deed) "of twenty poor children, and the maintenance of one discreet and godly matron;" and the school still continued to be called after its foundress, and the very spot on which the school-house stood, to be known by the name of Lady Lacy's Green.

It was a spot worthy of its destination,—a spot of remarkable cheerfulness and beauty. The Green was small, of irregular shape, and situate at a confluence of shady lanes. Half the roads and paths of the parish met there, probably for the convenience of crossing in that place, by a stone bridge of one

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arch covered with ivy, the winding rivulet which intersected the whole village, and which, sweeping in a narrow channel round the school garden, widened into a stream of some consequence in the richly-wooded meadows beyond. The banks of the brook, as it wound its glittering course over the green, were set, here and there, with clumps of forest trees, chiefly bright green elms, and aspens with their quivering leaves and their pale shining bark; whilst a magnificent beech stood alone near the gate leading to the school, partly overshadowing the little court in which the house was placed. The building itself was a beautiful small structure, in the ornamented style of Elizabeth's day, with pointed roofs and pinnacles, and clustered chimneys, and casement windows; the whole house enwreathed and garlanded by a most luxuriant vine. The date of the erection, 1563, was cut in a stone inserted in the brick-work above the porch: but the foundress had, with an unostentatious modesty, withheld her name; leaving it, as she safely might, to the grateful recollection of the successive generations who profited by her benevolence. Altogether it was a most gratifying scene to the eye and to the heart. No one ever saw Lady Lacy's school-house without admiration, especially in the play-hour at noon, when the children, freed from "restraint that sweetens liberty," were clustered under the old beech-tree, revelling in their innocent freedom, running, jumping, shouting, and laughing with all their might; the only sort of riot which it is pleasant to witness. The painter and the philanthropist might contemplate that scene with equal delight.

The right of appointing both the mistress and the scholars had been originally invested in the Lacy family, to whom nearly the whole of the parish had at one time belonged. But the estates, the manor, the hall-house, had long passed into other hands and other names, and this privilege of charity was now the only possession which the heirs of Lady Lacy retained in Aberleigh. Reserving to themselves the right of

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nominating the matron, her descendants had therefore delegated to the vicar and the parish officers the selection of the children, and the general regulation of the school—a sort of council of regency, which, for as simple and as peaceful as the government seems, a disputatious churchwarden or a sturdy overseer would sometimes contrive to render sufficiently stormy. I have known as much canvassing and almost as much ill-will in a contested election for one of Lady Lacy's scholarships, as for a scholarship in grander places, or even for an M. P.-ship in the next borough; and the great schism between the late Farmer Brookes and all his coadjutors, as to whether the original uniform of little green stuff gowns, with white bibs and aprons, tippets and mob, should be commuted for modern cotton frocks and cottage bonnets, fairly set the parish by the ears. Owing to the good farmer's glorious obstinacy, (which I suppose he called firmness,) the green-gownians lost the day. I believe that, as a matter of calculation, the man might be right, and that his costume was cheaper and more convenient; but I am sure that I should have been against him, right or wrong: the other dress was so pretty, so primitive, so neat, so becoming; the little lasses looked like rose buds in the midst of their leaves: besides, it was the old traditionary dress—the dress contrived and approved by Lady Lacy. Oh! it should never have been changed, never!

Since there was so much contention in the election of pupils, it was perhaps lucky for the vestry that the exercise of the more splendid piece of patronage, the appointment of a mistress, did not enter into its duties. Mr. Lacy, the representative of the foundress, a man of fortune in a distant county, generally bestowed the situation on some old dependant of his family. During the churchwardenship of Farmer Brookes, no less than three village gouvernantes arrived at Aberleigh—a quick succession! It made more than half the business of our zealous and bustling man of office, an amateur in such matters, to instruct and overlook them. The first im-

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portation was Dame Whitaker, a person of no small importance, who had presided as head nurse over two generations of the Lacys, and was now, on the dispersion of the last set of her nurslings to their different schools, and an unlucky quarrel with a favourite lady's maid, promoted and banished to this distant government. Nobody could well be more unfit for her new station, or better suited to her old. She was a nurse from top to toe. Round, portly, smiling, with a coaxing voice, and an indolent manner; much addicted to snuff and green tea, to sitting still, to telling long stories, and to humouring children. She spoiled every brat she came near, just as she had been used to spoil the little Master Edwards and Miss Julias of her ancient dominions. She could not have scolded if she would—the gift was not in her. Under her misrule the school grew into sad disorder; the girls not only learnt nothing, but unlearnt what they knew before; work was lost—even the new shifts of the Vicar's lady; books were torn; and, for the climax of evil, no sampler was prepared to carry round at Christmas, from house to house—the first time such an omission had occurred within the memory of man. Farmer Brookes was at his wit's end. He visited the school six days in the week, to admonish and reprove; he even went nigh to threaten that he would work a sampler himself; and finally bestowed on the unfortunate ex-nurse the nickname of Queen Log, a piece of disrespect which, together with other grievances, proved so annoying to poor Dame Whitaker, that she found the air of Aberleigh disagree with her, patched up a peace with her old enemy the lady's maid, abdicated that unruly and rebellious principality the school, and retired with great delight to her quiet home in the deserted nursery, where, as far as I know, she still remains.

The grief of the children on losing this most indulgent non-instructress, was not mitigated by the appearance or demeanour of her successor, who at first seemed a preceptress after Farmer Brookes's own heart, a perfect Queen Stork.

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Dame Banks was the widow of Mr. Lacy's gamekeeper; a little thin woman, with a hooked nose, a sharp voice, and a prodigious activity of tongue. She scolded all day long; and, for the first week, passed for a great teacher. After that time it began to be discovered that, in spite of her lessons, the children did not learn; notwithstanding her rating they did not mind, and in the midst of a continual bustle nothing was ever done. Dame Banks was in fact a well-intentioned, worthy woman, with a restless, irritable temper, a strong desire to do her duty, and a woeful ignorance how to set about it. She was rather too old to be taught either; at least she required a gentler instructor than the good churchwarden; and so much ill-will was springing up between them, that he had even been heard to regret the loss of Dame Whitaker's quietness, when very suddenly poor Dame Banks fell ill, and died. The sword had worn the scabbard; but she was better than she seemed; a thoroughly well-meaning woman—grateful, pious, and charitable; even our man of office admitted this.

The next in succession was one with whom my trifling pen, dearly as that light and fluttering instrument loves to dally and disport over the surface of things, must take no saucy freedom; one of whom we all felt it impossible to speak or to think without respect; one who made Farmer Brookes's office of adviser a sinecure, by putting the whole school, himself included, into its proper place, setting every body in order, and keeping them so. I don't know how she managed, unless by good sense and good humour, and that happy art of government, which seems no art at all, because it is so perfect; but the children were busy and happy, the vestry pleased, and the churchwarden contented. All went well under Mrs. Allen.

She was an elderly woman, nearer perhaps to seventy than to sixty, and of an exceedingly venerable and prepossessing appearance. Delicacy was her chief characteristic—a delicacy so complete that it pervaded her whole person, from her tall, slender figure, her fair, faded complexion, and her silver hair,

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to the exquisite nicety of dress by which, at all hours and seasons, from Sunday morning to Saturday night, she was invariably distinguished. The soil of the day was never seen on her apparel; dust would not cling to her snowy caps and handkerchiefs: such was the art magic of her neatness. Her very pins did their office in a different manner from those belonging to other people. Her manner was gentle, cheerful, and courteous, with a simplicity and propriety of expression that perplexed all listeners; it seemed so exactly what belongs to the highest birth and the highest breeding. She was humble, very humble; but her humility was evidently the result of a truly Christian spirit, and would equally have distinguished her in any station. The poor people, always nice judges of behaviour, felt, they did not know why, that she was their superior; the gentry of the neighbourhood suspected her to be their equal—some clergyman's or officer's widow, reduced in circumstances; and would have treated her as such, had she not, on discovering their mistake, eagerly undeceived them. She had been, she said, all her life a servant, the personal attendant of one dear mistress, on whose decease she had been recommended to Mr. Lacy; and to his kindness, under Providence, was indebted for a home and a provision for her helpless age, and the still more helpless youth of a poor orphan, far dearer to her than herself. This avowal, although it changed the character of the respect paid to Mrs. Allen, was certainly not calculated to diminish its amount; and the new mistress of Lady Lacy's school, and the beautiful order of her house and garden, continued to be the pride and admiration of Aberleigh.

The orphan of whom she spoke was a little girl about eleven years old, who lived with her, and whose black frock bespoke the recent death of some relative. She had lately, Mrs. Allen said, lost her grandmother—her only remaining parent, and had now no friend but herself on earth; but there was One above who was a Father to the fatherless, and he would pro-

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tect poor Jane! And as she said this, there was a touch of emotion, a break of the voice, a tremor on the lip, very unlike the usual cheerfulness and self-command of her manner. The child was evidently very dear to her. Jane was, indeed, a most interesting creature: not pretty—a girl of that age seldom is; the beauty of childhood is outgrown, that of youth not come; and Jane could scarcely ever have had any other pretensions to prettiness, than the fine expression of her dark grey eyes, and the general sweetness of her countenance. She was pale, thin, and delicate; serious and thoughtful far beyond her years; averse from play, and shrinking from notice. Her fondness for Mrs. Allen, and her constant and unremitting attention to her health and comforts, were peculiarly remarkable. Every part of their small housewifery, that her height and strength and skill would enable her to perform, she insisted on doing, and many things far beyond her power she attempted. Never was so industrious or so handy a little maiden. Old Nelly Chun, the char-woman, who went once a week to the house, to wash and bake and scour, declared that Jane did more than herself; and to all who knew Nelly's opinion of her own doings, this praise appeared superlative.

In the school-room she was equally assiduous, not as a learner, but as a teacher. None so clever as Jane in superintending the different exercises of the needle, the spelling-book, and the slate. From the little work-woman's first attempt to insert thread into a pocket handkerchief, the digging and ploughing of cambric, miscalled hemming, up to the nice and delicate mysteries of stitching and button-holing; from the easy junction of *a b, ab,* and *b a, ba,* to that tremendous sesquipedelian word *irrefragability,* at which even I tremble as I write; from the Numeration Table to Practice, nothing came amiss to her. In figures she was particularly quick. Generally speaking, her patience with the other children, however dull or tiresome or giddy they might be, was exemplary; but a false accomptant, a stupid arithmetician, would

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put her out of humour. The only time I ever heard her sweet, gentle voice raised a note above its natural key, was in reprimanding Susan Wheeler, a sturdy, square-made, rosy-cheeked lass, as big again as herself, the dunce and beauty of the school, who had three times cast up a sum of three figures, and three times made the total wrong. Jane ought to have admired the ingenuity evinced by such a variety of error; but she did not; it fairly put her in a passion. She herself was not only clever in figures, but fond of them to an extraordinary degree—luxuriated in Long Division, and revelled in the Rule-of-Three. Had she been a boy, she would probably have been a great mathematician, and have won that fickle, fleeting, shadowy wreath, that crown made of the rainbow, that vainest of all earthly pleasures, but which yet *is* a pleasure—Fame.

Happier, far happier was the good, the lowly, the pious child, in her humble duties! Grave and quiet as she seemed, she had many moments of intense and placid enjoyment, when the duties of the day were over, and she sat reading in the porch, by the side of Mrs. Allen, or walked with her in the meadows on a Sunday evening after church. Jane was certainly contented and happy; and yet every one that saw her, thought of her with that kind of interest which is akin to pity. There was a pale, fragile grace about her, such as we sometimes see in a rose which has blown in the shade; or rather, to change the simile, the drooping and delicate look of a tender plant removed from a hothouse to the open air. We could not help feeling sure (notwithstanding our mistake with regard to Mrs. Allen) that *this* was indeed a transplanted flower; and that the village school, however excellently her habits had become inured to her situation, was not her proper atmosphere.

Several circumstances corroborated our suspicions. My lively young friend Sophia Grey, standing with me one day at the gate of the school-house, where I had been talking with Mrs. Allen, remarked to me, in French, the sly, demure

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vanity with which Susan Wheeler, whose beauty had attracted her attention, was observing and returning her glances. The playful manner in which Sophia described Susan's "regard furtif," made me smile; and looking accidentally at Jane, I saw that she was smiling too, clearly comprehending, and enjoying the full force of the pleasantry. She must understand French; and when questioned, she confessed she did, and thankfully accepted the loan of books in that language. Another time, being sent on a message to the vicarage, and left for some minutes alone in the parlour, with a piano standing open in the room, she could not resist the temptation of touching the keys, and was discovered playing an air of Mozart, with great taste and execution. At this detection she blushed, as if caught in a crime, and hurried away in tears and without her message. It was clear that she had once learnt music. But the surest proof that Jane's original station had been higher than that which she now filled, was the mixture of respect and fondness with which Mrs. Allen treated her, and the deep regret she sometimes testified at seeing her employed in any menial office.

At last, elicited by some warm praise of the charming child, our good schoolmistress disclosed her story. Jane Mowbray was the grand-daughter of the lady in whose service Mrs. Allen had passed her life. Her father had been a man of high family and splendid fortune; had married beneath himself, as it was called, a friendless orphan, with no portion but beauty and virtue; and, on her death, which followed shortly on the birth of her daughter, had plunged into every kind of vice and extravagance. What need to tell a tale of sin and suffering? Mr. Mowbray had ruined himself, had ruined all belonging to him, and finally had joined our armies abroad as a volunteer, and had fallen undistinguished in his first battle. The news of his death was fatal to his indulgent mother; and when she too died, Mrs. Allen blessed the Providence which, by throwing in her way a recommendation to Lady Lacy's

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school, had enabled her to support the dear object of her mistress's love and prayers. "Had Miss Mowbray no connexions?" was the natural question. "Yes; one very near, —an aunt, the sister of her father, richly married in India. But Sir William was a proud and a stern man, upright in his own conduct, and implacable to error. Lady Ely was a sweet, gentle creature, and doubtless would be glad to extend a mother's protection to the orphan; but Sir William—oh! he was so unrelenting! He had abjured Mr. Mowbray, and all connected with him. She had written to inform them where the dear child was, but had no expectation of any answer from India."

Time verified this prediction. The only tidings from India, at all interesting to Jane Mowbray, were contained in the paragraph of a newspaper which announced Lady Ely's death, and put an end to all hopes of protection in that quarter. Years passed on, and found her still with Mrs. Allen at Lady Lacy's Green, more and more beloved and respected from day to day. She had now attained almost to womanhood. Strangers, I believe, called her plain; we, who knew her, thought her pretty. Her figure was tall and straight as a cypress, pliant and flexible as a willow, full of gentle grace, whether in repose or in motion. She had a profusion of light brown hair, a pale complexion, dark grey eyes, a smile of which the character was rather sweet than gay, and such a countenance! no one could look at her without wishing her well, or without being sure that she deserved all good wishes. Her manners were modest and elegant, and she had much of the self-taught knowledge, which is, of all knowledge, the surest and the best, because acquired with most difficulty, and fixed in the memory by the repetition of effort. Every one had assisted her to the extent of his power, and of her willingness to accept assistance; for both she and Mrs. Allen had a pride—call it independence—which rendered it impossible, even to the friends who were most honoured by their good opinion, to be as useful

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to them as they could have wished. To give Miss Mowbray time for improvement had, however, proved a powerful emollient to the pride of our dear schoolmistress; and that time had been so well employed, that her acquirements were considerable; whilst in mind and character she was truly admirable; mild, grateful, and affectionate, and imbued with a deep religious feeling, which influenced every action and pervaded every thought. So gifted, she was deemed by her constant friends, the vicar and his lady, perfectly competent to the care and education of children; it was agreed that she should enter a neighbouring family, as a successor to their then governess, early in the ensuing spring; and she, although sad at the prospect of leaving her aged protectress, acquiesced in their decision.

One fine Sunday in the October preceding this dreaded separation, as Miss Mowbray, with Mrs. Allen leaning on her arm, was slowly following the little train of Lady Lacy's scholars from church, an elderly gentleman, sickly-looking and emaciated, accosted a pretty young woman, who was loitering with some other girls at the church-yard gate, and asked her several questions respecting the school and its mistress. Susan Wheeler (for it happened to be our old acquaintance) was delighted to be singled out by so grand a gentleman, and being a kind-hearted creature in the main, spoke of the school-house and its inhabitants exactly as they deserved. "Mrs. Allen," she said, "was the best woman in the world—the very best, except just Miss Mowbray, who was better still,—only too particular about summing, which you know, Sir," added Susan, "people can't learn if they can't. She is going to be a governess in the spring," continued the loquacious damsel; "and it's to be hoped the little ladies will take kindly to their tables, or it will be a sad grievance to Miss Jane."—"A governess! Where can I make inquiries concerning Miss Mowbray?"—"At the vicarage, Sir," answered Susan, dropping her little curtsy, and turning

away, well pleased with the gentleman's condescension, and with half-a-crown which he had given her in return for her intelligence. The stranger, meanwhile, walked straight to the vicarage: and in less than half an hour the vicar repaired with him to Lady Lacy's Green.

This stranger, so drooping, so sickly, so emaciated, was the proud Indian uncle, the stern Sir William Ely! Sickness and death had been busy with him and with his. He had lost his health, his wife, and his children; and softened by affliction, was returned to England a new man, anxious to forgive and to be forgiven, and, above all, desirous to repair his neglect and injustice toward the only remaining relative of the wife whom he had so fondly loved and so tenderly lamented. In this frame of mind, such a niece as Jane Mowbray was welcomed with no common joy. His delight in her, and his gratitude toward her protectress, were unbounded. He wished them both to accompany him home, and reside with him constantly. Jane promised to do so; but Mrs. Allen, with her usual admirable feeling of propriety, clung to the spot which had been to her a "city of refuge," and refused to leave it in spite of all the entreaties of uncle and of niece. It was a happy decision for Aberleigh; for what could Aberleigh have done without its good schoolmistress!

She lives there still, its ornament and its pride; and every year Jane Mowbray comes for a long visit, and makes a holiday in the school and in the whole place. Jane Mowbray, did I say? No! not Jane Mowbray now. She has changed that dear name for the only name that could be dearer:—she is married—married to the eldest son of Mr. Lacy, the lineal representative of Dame Eleanor Lacy, the honoured foundress of the school. It was in a voice tremulous more from feeling than from age, that Mrs. Allen welcomed the young heir, when he brought his fair bride to Aberleigh; and it was with a yet stronger and deeper emotion that the bridegroom, with his own Jane in his hand, visited the asylum which she and

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her venerable guardian owed to the benevolence and the piety of his ancestress, whose good deeds had thus showered down blessings on her remote posterity.

FANNY'S FAIRINGS.

A HAPPY boy was Thomas Stokes, the blacksmith's son, of Upton Lea! Last May morning he was to go to B—— fair, with his eldest brother William, and his cousin Fanny, and he never closed his eyes all night for thinking of the pleasure he should enjoy on the morrow. Thomas, "for shortness called" Tom, was a lively, merry boy of nine years old, rising ten, as the horse-dealers say, and had never been at a fair in his life; so that his sleeplessness as well as the frequent soliloquies of triumphant ho! ho! (his usual exclamation when highly pleased,) and the perpetual course of broad smiles in which his delight had been vented for a week before, were nothing remarkable. His companions were as wakeful and happy as himself. Now that might be accounted for in his cousin's case, since it was also her first fair; for Fanny, a pretty dark-eyed lass of eighteen, was a Londoner, and, till she arrived that winter on a visit to her aunt, had never been out of the sound of Bow-bell; but why William, a young blacksmith of one-and-twenty, to whom fairs were almost as familiar as horse-shoes, why he should lose his sleep on the occasion, is less easy to discover—perhaps from sympathy. Through Tom's impatience the party were early astir; indeed, he had roused the whole house long before day-break; and betimes in the forenoon they set forth on their progress; Tom in a state of spirits that caused him to say, Ho! ho! every minute, and much endangered the new hat that he was tossing in the air; William and Fanny, with a more concen-

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trated and a far quieter joy. One should not see a finer young couple: he, decked in his Sunday attire, tall, sturdy, and muscular, with a fine open countenance, and an air of rustic gallantry that became him well; she, pretty and modest, with a look of gentility about her plain dark gown and cottage bonnet, and the little straw basket that she carried in her hand, which even more than her ignorance of tree, and bird, and leaf, and flower, proclaimed her town breeding;—although that ignorance was such, that Tom declared that, on her first arriving at Upton Lea, she did not know an oak from an elm, or a sparrow from a blackbird. Tom himself had yet to learn poor Fanny's excuses, how much oaks and elms resemble each other in the London air, and how very closely in colour, though not in size, a city sparrow approaches to a blackbird.

Their way led through pleasant footpaths; every bank covered with cowslips and blue-bells, and overhung with the budding hawthorn, and the tasselled hazel; now between orchards, whose trees, one flush of blossom, rose from amidst beds of daffodils, with their dark waving spear-like leaves and golden flowers; now along fields, newly sown with barley, where the doves and wood-pigeons, pretty innocent thieves, were casting a glancing shadow on the ground as they flew from furrow to furrow, picking up the freshly-planted grain; and now between close lanes peopled with nightingales; until at last they emerged into the gay high road, where their little party fell into the flood of people pouring on to the fair, much after the manner in which a tributary brooklet is lost in the waters of some mighty stream.

A mingled stream in good sooth it was, a most motley procession! Country folks in all varieties, from the pink-ribanded maiden, the belle of her parish, tripping along so merrily, to the sober and demure village matron, who walked beside her with a slow lagging pace, as if tired already; from the gay Lothario of the hamlet, with his clean smock-frock, and his hat on one side, who strutted along, ogling the lass in the pink

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ribands, to the "grave and reverend signor," the patriarch of the peasantry, with his straight white hair, and his well-preserved wedding-suit, who hobbled stoopingly on, charged with two great-grandchildren—a sprightly girl of six lugging him forward, a lumpish boy of three dragging him back. Children were there of all conditions, from "mamma's darlings," in the coronet carriage—the little lords and ladies, to whom a fair was, as yet, only a "word of power," down to the brown gipsy urchins strapped on their mother's back, to whom it was a familiar sight—no end to the children! no end to the grown people! no end to the vehicles! Carts crammed as full as they could be stowed, gigs with one, two, three, and four inside passengers; waggons laden with men instead of corn; droves of pigs; flocks of sheep; herds of cattle; strings of horses; with their several drovers, and drivers of all kinds and countries—English, Irish, Welsh, and Scotch—all bound to the fair. Here an Italian boy with his tray of images; there a Savoyard with her hurdy-gurdy; and lastly, struggling through the midst of the throng, that painful minister of pleasure, an itinerant showman, with his box of puppets and his tawdry wife, pushing, and toiling, and straining every nerve for fear of being too late. No end to the people! no end to the din! The turnpike-man opened his gate and shut his ears in despairing resignation. Never was known so full a May-fair.

And amongst the thousands assembled in the market-place at B—— it would have been difficult to find a happier group than our young cousins. Tom, to be sure, had been conscious of a little neglect on the part of his companions. The lectures on ornithology, with which, chemin faisant, he had thought fit to favour Fanny, (children do dearly love to teach grown people, and all country boys are learned in birds,) had been rather thrown away on that fair damsel. William and she had walked arm-and-arm; and when he tried to join them on one side, he found himself cast off,—and when on the other,

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let go. Poor Tom was, evidently, detrop in the party. However, he bore the affront like a philosopher, and soon forgot his grievances in the solid luxuries of tarts and gingerbread; in the pleasant business of purchasing and receiving petty presents; in the chatter, the bustle, and the merriment of the fair. Amidst all his delight, however, he could not but feel a little curiosity, when William having lured him to a stall, and fixed him there in the interesting occupation of selecting a cricket-ball, persuaded Fanny to go under his escort to make some private purchases at the neighbouring shops. Tom's attention to his own important bargain was sadly distracted by watching his companions as they proceeded from the linen-draper's to the jeweller's, and from the jeweller's to the pastry-cook's; looking, the whilst, the one proud and happy, the other shy and ashamed. Tom could not tell what to make of it, and chose, in his perplexity, the very worst ball that was offered to him; but as he had seen their several parcels snugly deposited in the straw basket, he summoned courage to ask, point blank, what it contained; at which question, Fanny blushed, and William laughed; and on a repetition of the inquiry answered, with an arch smile—"Fanny's fairings." Now as Fanny had before purchased toys, and cakes, and such like trifles, for the whole family, this reply, and the air with which it was delivered, served rather to stimulate than to repress the vague suspicions that were floating in the boy's brain. A crowd, however, is no place for impertinent curiosity. Loneliness and ennui are necessary to the growth of that weed. If there had been a fair in Bluebeard's castle, his wives would have kept their heads on their shoulders; the blue chamber and the diamond key would have tempted in vain. So Tom betook himself to the enjoyment of the scene before him, applying himself the more earnestly to the business of pleasure, as they were to return to Upton Lea at four o'clock.

Four o'clock arrived, and found our hero, Thomas Stokes, still untired of stuffing and staring. He had eaten more cakes

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oranges, and gingerbread, than the gentlest reader would deem credible; and he had seen well nigh all the sights of the fair; —the tall man, and the short woman, and the calf with two heads; had attended the in-door horsemanship and the out-door play; the dancing dogs and two raree-shows; and lastly, had visited and admired the wonders of the menagerie, scraped acquaintance with a whole legion of parrots and monkeys, poked up a boa-constrictor, patted a lioness, and had the honour of presenting his blunderbuss to the elephant, although he was not much inclined to boast of this exploit, having been so frightened at his own temerity, as to run away out of the booth before the sagacious but deliberate quadruped had found time to fire.

Not a whit tired was Tom. He could have wished the fair to last a week. Nevertheless, he obeyed his brother's summons; and the little party set out on their return, the two elder ones again linked arm in arm, and apparently forgetting that the world contained any human being except their own two selves. Poor Tom trudged after, beginning to feel, in the absence of other excitement, a severe relapse of his undefined curiosity, respecting Fanny's fairings. On tripped William and Fanny, and after trudged Tom, until a string of unruly horses passing rapidly by, threw the whole group into confusion: no one was hurt, but the pretty Londoner was so much alarmed as to afford her companion ample employment in placing her on a bank, soothing her fears, and railing at the misconduct of the horse-people. As the cavalcade disappeared, the fair damsel recovered her spirits, and began to inquire for her basket, which she had dropped in her terror, and for Tom, who was also missing. They were not far to seek. Perched in the opposite hedge sad master Tom, in the very act of satisfying his curiosity by examining her basket, smiling and ho! ho!-ing with all his might. Parcel after parcel did he extract and unfold:—first a roll of white satin riband—"ho! ho!"—then a pair of white cambric gloves—"ho!

ho!" again;—then a rich-looking, dark-coloured, small plum-cake, nicely frosted with white sugar,—"ho! ho! Miss Fanny!"—last of all a plain gold ring, wrapped in three papers, silver, white, and brown,—"ho! ho!" once more shouted the boy, twirling the wedding-ring on his own red finger, the fourth of the left hand,—"so these are Fanny's fairings! Ho! ho!—ho! ho!"

WHITSUN-EVE.

THE pride of my heart and the delight of my eyes is my garden. Our house, which is in dimensions very much like a bird-cage, and might, with almost equal convenience, be laid on a shelf, or hung up in a tree, would be utterly unbearable in warm weather, were it not that we have a retreat out of doors,—and a very pleasant retreat it is. To make my readers comprehend it, I must describe our whole territories.

Fancy a small plot of ground, with a pretty low irregular cottage at one end; a large granary, divided from the dwelling by a little court running along one side; and a long thatched shed, open towards the garden, and supported by wooden pillars, on the other. The bottom is bounded, half by an old wall, and half by an old paling, over which we see a pretty distance of woody hills. The house, granary, wall, and paling, are covered with vines, cherry-trees, roses, honeysuckles, and jessamines, with great clusters of tall hollyhocks running up between them; a large elder overhanging the little gate, and a magnificent bay-tree, such a tree as shall scarcely be matched in these parts, breaking with its beautiful conical form the horizontal lines of the buildings. This is my garden; and the long pillared shed, the sort of rustic arcade, which runs along one side, parted from the flower-

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beds by a row of rich geraniums, is our out-of-door drawing-room.

I know nothing so pleasant as to sit there on a summer afternoon, with the western sun flickering through the great elder-tree, and lighting up our gay parterres, where flowers and flowering shrubs are set as thick as grass in a field, a wilderness of blossom, interwoven, intertwined, wreathy, garlandy, profuse beyond all profusion, where we may guess that there is such a thing as mould, but never see it. I know nothing so pleasant as to sit in the shade of that dark bower, with the eye resting on that bright piece of colour, lighted so gloriously by the evening sun, now catching a glimpse of the little birds as they fly rapidly in and out of their nests—for there are always two or three birds-nests in the thick tapestry of cherry-trees, honeysuckles, and China-roses, which covers our walls—now tracing the gay gambols of the common butterflies as they sport around the dahlias; now watching that rarer moth, which the country people, fertile in pretty names, call the bee-bird;* that bird-like insect, which flutters in the hottest days over the sweetest flowers, inserting its long proboscis into the small tube of the jessamine, and hovering over the scarlet blossoms of the geranium, whose bright colour seems reflected on its own feathery breast: that insect which seems so thoroughly a creature of the air, never at rest; always, even when feeding, self-poised, and self-supported, and whose wings, in their ceaseless motion, have a sound so deep, so full, so lulling, so musical. Nothing so pleasant as to sit amid that mixture of the flower and the leaf, watching the bee-bird! Nothing so pretty to look at as my garden! It is quite a picture; only unluckily it resembles a picture in more qualities than one,—it is fit for nothing but to look at. One might as well think of walking in a bit of framed canvass. There are walks to be sure—tiny paths of smooth gravel, by

* Sphinx ligustri, privet hawk-moth.

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courtesy called such—but they are so overhung by roses and lilies, and such gay encroachers—so over-run by convolvulus, and heart's-ease, and mignonette, and other sweet stragglers, that, except to edge through them occasionally, for the purposes of planting, or weeding, or watering, there might as well be no paths at all. Nobody thinks of walking in my garden. Even May glides along with a delicate and trackless step, like a swan through the water; and we, its two-footed denizens, are fain to treat it as if it were really a saloon, and go out for a walk towards sun-set, just as if we had not been sitting in the open air all day.

What a contrast from the quiet garden to the lively street! Saturday night is always a time of stir and bustle in our village, and this is Whitsun-Eve, the pleasantest Saturday of all the year, when London journeymen and servant lads and lasses snatch a short holiday, to visit their families. A short and precious holiday, the happiest and liveliest of any; for even the gambols and merry-makings of Christmas offer but a poor enjoyment, compared with the rural diversions, the Mayings, revels, and cricket-matches of Whitsuntide.

We ourselves are to have a cricket-match on Monday, not played by the men, who, since a certain misadventure with the Beech-hillers, are, I am sorry to say, rather chap-fallen, but by the boys, who, zealous for the honour of their parish, and headed by their bold leader Ben Kirby, marched in a body to our antagonists' ground the Sunday after our melancholy defeat, challenged the boys of that proud hamlet, and beat them out and out on the spot. Never was a more signal victory. Our boys enjoyed this triumph with so little moderation that it had like to have produced a very tragical catastrophe. The captain of the Beech-hill youngsters, a capital bowler, by name Amos Stone, enraged past all bearing by the crowing of his adversaries, flung the ball at Ben Kirby with so true an aim, that if that sagacious leader had not warily ducked his head when he saw it coming, there would

probably have been a coroner's inquest on the case, and Amos Stone would have been tried for manslaughter. He let fly with such vengeance, that the cricket-ball was found embedded in a bank of clay five hundred yards off, as if it had been a cannon shot. Tom Coper and Farmer Thackum, the umpires, both say that they never saw so tremendous a ball. If Amos Stone live to be a man (I mean to say, if he be not hanged first) he'll be a pretty player. He is coming here on Monday with his party to play the return match, the umpires having respectively engaged, Farmer Thackum that Amos shall keep the peace, Tom Coper that Ben shall give no unnecessary or wanton provocation—a nicely worded and lawyer-like clause, and one that proves that Tom Coper hath his doubts of the young gentleman's discretion; and, of a truth, so have I. I would not be Ben Kirby's surety, cautiously as the security is worded,—no! not for a white double dahlia, the present object of my ambition.

This village of ours is swarming to-night like a hive of bees, and all the church bells round are pouring out their merriest peals, as if to call them together. I must try to give some notion of the various figures.

First there is a group suited to Teniers, a cluster of out-of-door customers of the Rose, old benchers of the inn, who sit round a table smoking and drinking in high solemnity to the sound of Timothy's fiddle. Next, a mass of eager boys, the combatants of Monday, who are surrounding the shoemaker's shop, where an invisible hole in their ball is mending by Master Keep himself, under the joint superintendence of Ben Kirby and Tom Coper. Ben showing much verbal respect and outward deference for his umpire's judgment and experience, but managing to get the ball done his own way after all; whilst outside the shop, the rest of the eleven, the less trusted commons, are shouting and bawling round Joel Brent, who is twisting the waxed twine round the handles of the bats—the poor bats, which please nobody, which the taller

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youths are despising as too little and too light, and the smaller are abusing as too heavy and too large. Happy critics! winning their match can hardly be a greater delight—even if to win it they be doomed! Farther down the street is the pretty black-eyed girl, Sally Wheeler, come home for a day's holiday from B., escorted by a tall footman in a dashing livery, whom she is trying to curtsy off before her deaf grandmother sees him. I wonder whether she will succeed!

Ascending the hill are two couples of a different description. Daniel Tubb and his fair Valentine, walking boldly along like licensed lovers; they have been asked twice in church, and are to be married on Tuesday; and closely following that happy pair, near each other, but not together, come Jem Tanner and Mabel Green, the poor culprits of the wheat-hoeing. Ah! the little clerk hath not relented! The course of true love doth not yet run smooth in that quarter. Jem dodges along, whistling "cherry-ripe," pretending to walk by himself, and to be thinking of nobody; but every now and then he pauses in his negligent saunter, and turns round outright to steal a glance at Mabel, who, on her part, is making believe to walk with poor Olive Hathaway, the lame mantua-maker, and even affecting to talk and to listen to that gentle, humble creature, as she points to the wild flowers on the common, and the lambs and children disporting amongst the gorse, but whose thoughts and eyes are evidently fixed on Jem Tanner, as she meets his backward glance with a blushing smile, and half springs forward to meet him; whilst Olive has broken off the conversation as soon as she perceived the pre-occupation of her companion, and begun humming, perhaps unconsciously, two or three lines of Burns, whose "Whistle and I 'll come to thee, my love," and "Gi'e me a glance of thy bonnie black ee," were never better exemplified than in the couple before her. Really it is curious to watch them, and to see how gradually the attraction of this tantalizing vicinity becomes irresistible, and the rustic lover rushes to his pretty mistress

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like the needle to the magnet. On they go, trusting to the deepening twilight, to the little clerk's absence, to the good humour of the happy lads and lasses, who are passing and re-passing on all sides—or rather, perhaps, in a happy oblivion of the cross uncle, the kind villagers, the squinting lover, and the whole world. On they trip, linked arm in arm, he trying to catch a glimpse of her glowing face under her bonnet, and she hanging down her head and avoiding his gaze with a mixture of modesty and coquetry, which well becomes the rural beauty. On they go, with a reality and intensity of affection, which must overcome all obstacles; and poor Olive follows with an evident sympathy in their happiness, which makes her almost as enviable as they; and we pursue our walk amidst the moonshine and the nightingales, with Jacob Frost's cart looming in the distance, and the merry sounds of Whitsuntide, the shout, the laugh, and the song, echoing all around us, like "noises of the air."

JESSY LUCAS.

About the centre of a deep, winding, and woody lane, in our neighbouring village of Aberleigh, stands an old farm-house,

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whose stables, out-buildings, and ample barn-yard, have a peculiarly forlorn and deserted appearance; they can, in fact, scarcely be said to be occupied; the person who rents the land, preferring to live at a large farm about a mile distant, leaving this lonely house to the care of a labourer and his wife, who reside in one end, and have the charge of a few colts and heifers, that run in the orchard and an adjoining meadow; while the vacant rooms are tenanted by a widow in humble circumstances, and her young family.

The house is beautifully situated; deep, as I have said, in a narrow woody lane, which winds between high banks, now feathered with hazel, now studded with pollards and forest trees; until, opposite Kibe's farm, it widens sufficiently to admit a large clear pond, round which the hedge, closely and regularly set, with a row of tall elms, sweeps in a graceful curve, forming for that bright mirror a rich leafy frame. A little way farther on the lane widens, and makes an abrupt winding, as it is crossed by a broad shallow stream, a branch of the Loddon, which comes meandering along, from a chain of beautiful meadows, then turns in a narrower channel, by the side of the road, and finally spreads itself into a large piece of water, almost a lakelet, amidst the rushes and willows of Hartley Moor. A foot-bridge is flung over the stream, where it crosses the lane, which, with a giant oak growing on the bank, and throwing its broad branches far on the opposite side, forms in every season a pretty rural picture.

Kibe's farm is as picturesque as its situation; very old, very irregular, with gable ends, clustered chimneys, casement windows, a large porch, and a sort of square wing, jutting out even with the porch, and covered with a luxuriant vine, which has quite the effect, especially when seen by moon-light, of an ivy-mantled tower. On one side extend the ample, but disused farm-buildings; on the other, the old orchard, whose trees are so wild, so hoary, and so huge, as to convey the idea of a fruit forest. Behind the house is an ample kitchen-garden,

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and before, a neat flower-court, the exclusive demesne of Mrs. Lucas and her family, to whom indeed the labourer, John Miles, and his good wife Dinah, served, in some sort, as domestics.

Mrs. Lucas had known far better days; her husband had been an officer, and died fighting bravely in one of the great victories of the last war, leaving her with three children, one lovely boy and two delicate girls, to struggle through the world, as best she might. She was an accomplished woman, and at first settled in a great town, and endeavoured to improve her small income by teaching music and languages. But she was country bred; her children too had been born in the country, amidst the sweetest recesses of the New Forest, and pining herself for liberty, and solitude, and green fields, and fresh air, she soon began to fancy that her children were visibly deteriorating in health and appearance, and pining for them also: and finding that her old servant, Dinah Miles, was settled with her husband in this deserted farm-house, she applied to his master, to rent, for a few months, the untenanted apartments, came to Aberleigh, and fixed there apparently for life.

We lived in different parishes, and she declined company, so that I seldom met Mrs. Lucas, and had lost sight of her for some time, retaining merely a general recollection of the mild, placid, elegant mother, surrounded by three rosy, romping, bright-eyed children, when the arrival of an intimate friend at Aberleigh vicarage, caused me frequently to pass the lonely farm-house, and threw this interesting family again under my observation.

The first time that I saw them, was on a bright summer evening, when the nightingale was yet in the coppice, the brier-rose blossoming in the hedge, and the sweet scent of the bean-fields perfuming the air. Mrs. Lucas, still lovely and elegant, though somewhat faded and care-worn, was walking pensively up and down the grass-path of the pretty flower-

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court: her eldest daughter, a rosy bright brunette, with her dark hair floating in all directions, was darting about like a bird: now tying up the pinks, now watering the geraniums; now collecting the fallen rose-leaves into the straw bonnet, which dangled from her arm; and now feeding a brood of bantams from a little barley measure, which that sagacious and active colony seemed to recognise as if by instinct, coming, long before she called them, at their swiftest pace, between a run and a fly, to await, with their usual noisy and bustling patience, the showers of grain, which she flung to them across the paling. It was a beautiful picture of youth, and health, and happiness; and her clear, gay voice, and brilliant smile, accorded well with her shape and motion, as light as a butterfly, and as wild as the wind. A beautiful picture was that rosy lass of fifteen, in her unconscious loveliness, and I might have continued gazing upon her longer, had I not been attracted by an object no less charming, although in a very different way.

It was a slight elegant girl, apparently about a year younger than the pretty romp of the flower-garden, not unlike her in form and feature, but totally distinct in colouring and expression.

She sat in the old porch, wreathed with jessamine and honeysuckle, with the western sun floating round her like a glory, and displaying the singular beauty of her chesnut hair, brown, with a golden light, and the exceeding delicacy of her smooth and finely-grained complexion, so pale, and yet so healthful. Her whole face and form had a bending and statue-like grace, increased by the adjustment of her splendid hair, which was parted on her white forehead, and gathered up behind in a large knot, a natural coronet. Her eye-brows, and long eye-lashes, were a few shades darker than her hair, and singularly rich and beautiful. She was plaiting straw, rapidly and skilfully, and bent over her work with a mild and placid attention, a sedate pensiveness that did not belong

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to her age, and which contrasted strangely and sadly with the gaiety of her laughing and brilliant sister, who at this moment darted up to her with a handful of pinks and some groundsel. Jessy received them with a smile; such a smile! spoke a few sweet words, in a sweet sighing voice; put the flowers in her bosom, and the groundsel in the cage of a linnet that hung near her; and then resumed her seat, and her work, imitating, better than I have ever heard them imitated, the various notes of a nightingale who was singing in the opposite hedge, whilst I, ashamed of loitering longer, passed on.

The next time I saw her, my interest in this lovely creature was increased tenfold, for I then knew that Jessy was blind; a misfortune always so touching, especially in early youth, and in her case rendered peculiarly affecting by the personal character of the individual. We soon became acquainted, and even intimate, under the benign auspices of the kind mistress of the vicarage, and every interview served to increase the interest excited by the whole family, and most of all, by the sweet blind girl.

Never was any human being more gentle, generous, and grateful, or more unfeignedly resigned to her great calamity; the pensiveness that marked her character arose, as I soon perceived, from a different source. Her blindness had been of recent occurrence, arising from inflammation, unskilfully treated, and was pronounced incurable; but from coming on so lately, it admitted of several alleviations, of which she was accustomed to speak with a devout and tender gratitude. "She could work," she said, "as well as ever; and cut out, and write, and dress herself, and keep the keys, and run errands in the house she knew so well, without making any mistake or confusion. Reading, to be sure, she had been forced to give up, and drawing, and some day or other she would show me, only that it seemed so vain, some verses which her brother William had written upon a group of wild flowers which she had begun before her misfortune. Oh! it was almost worth while to be

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blind, to be the subject of such verse, and the object of such affection. Her dear mamma was very good to her, and so was Emma; but William! oh she wished that I knew William! no one could be so kind as he! oh it was impossible! He read to her, he talked to her, he walked with her, he taught her to feel confidence in walking alone; he had made for her the wooden steps up the high bank which led into Kibe's meadow. He had put the hand-rail on the old bridge, so that now she could get across without danger, even when the brook was flooded. He had tamed her linnet; he had constructed the wooden frame, by the aid of which she could write so comfortably and evenly; could write letters to him, and say, her own self, all that she felt of love and gratitude; and that," she continued with a deep sigh, "was her chief comfort now, for William was gone, and they should never meet again; never alive, that she was sure of, she knew it." "But why, Jessy?" "Oh, because William was so much too good for this world, there was nobody like William! and he was gone for a soldier. Old General Lucas, her father's uncle, had sent for him abroad, had given him a commission in his regiment, and he would never come home, at least they should never meet again, of that she was sure—she knew it!"

This persuasion was evidently the master grief of poor Jessy's life; the cause which, far more than her blindness, faded her cheek, and saddened her spirit. How it had arisen no one knew, partly perhaps from some lurking superstition, some idle word, or idler omen, which had taken root in her mind, nourished by the calamity which, in other respects, she bore so calmly, but which left her so often in darkness and loneliness to brood over her own gloomy forebodings; partly from her trembling sensibility, and partly from the delicacy of frame and of habit, which had always characterized the object of her love, a slender youth, whose ardent spirit was but too apt to overtask his body.

However it found admittance, there the presentiment was,

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hanging like a dark cloud over the sun-shine of Jessy's young life. Reasoning was useless; they know little of the passions who seek to argue with that most intractable of them all, the fear that is born of love. So Mrs. Lucas and Emma tried to amuse away these sad thoughts, trusting to time, to William's letters, and above all to William's return, to eradicate the evil. The letters came punctually and gaily; letters that might have quieted the heart of any sister in England, except the fluttering heart of Jessy Lucas. William spoke of improved health, of increased strength, of actual promotion, and expected recall. At last he even announced his return, under auspices the most gratifying to his mother, and the most beneficial to her family. The regiment was ordered home, and the old and wealthy relation, under whose protection he had already risen so rapidly, had expressed his intention to accompany him to Kibe's farm, to be introduced to his nephew's widow and daughters, especially Jessy, for whom he expressed himself greatly interested. A letter from General Lucas himself, which arrived by the same post, was still more explicit; it adduced the son's admirable character, and exemplary conduct, as reasons for befriending the mother, and avowed his design of providing for each of his young relations, and of making William his heir.

For half an hour after the first hearing of these letters, Jessy was happy; till the peril of a winter voyage, for it was deep January, crossed her imagination, and checked her joy. At length, long before they were expected, another letter arrived, dated Portsmouth. They had sailed by the next vessel to that which conveyed their previous despatches, and might be expected hourly at Kibe's farm. The voyage was past, safely past, and the weight seemed now really taken from Jessy's heart. She raised her sweet face, and smiled; yet still it was a fearful and trembling joy, and somewhat of fear was mingled even with the very intensity of her hope.

It had been a time of wind and rain, and the Loddon, the beautiful Loddon, always so affluent of water, had overflowed

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its boundaries, and swelled the smaller streams which it fed into torrents. The brook which crossed Kibe's lane had washed away part of the foot-bridge, destroying poor William's railing, and was still foaming and dashing, like a cataract. Now this was the nearest way; and if William should insist on coming that way! To be sure, the carriage-road was round by Grazeley Green, but to cross the road would save half a mile; and William, dear William, would never think of danger, to get to those whom he loved. These were Jessy's thoughts; the fear seemed impossible, for no postillion would think of breasting that roaring stream; but the fond sister's heart was fluttering like a new-caught bird, and she feared she knew not what.

All day she paced the little court, and stopped and listened, and listened and stopped. About sun-set, with the nice sense of sound which seemed to come with her fearful calamity, and that fine sense quickened by anxiety, expectation, and love, she heard, she thought she heard, she was sure she heard the sound of a carriage rapidly advancing on the other side of the stream. "It is only the noise of the rushing waters," cried Emma. "I hear a carriage, the horses, the wheels," replied Jessy; and darted off at once, with the double purpose of meeting William and warning the postillion against crossing the stream. Emma and her mother followed, fast! fast! but what speed could vie with Jessy's when the object was William! They called, but she neither heard, nor answered. Before they had won to the bend in the lane, she had reached the brook, and long before either of her pursuers had gained the bridge, her foot had slipt from the wet and tottering plank, and she was borne resistlessly down the stream. Assistance was immediately procured; men, and boats, and ropes; for the sweet blind girl was beloved by all; and many a poor man perilled his life, in a fruitless endeavour to save Jessy Lucas. And William too was there, for Jessy's quickened sense had not deceived her. William was there, strug-

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gling with all the strength of love and agony, to rescue that dear and helpless creature; but every effort, although he persevered till he too was taken out senseless—every effort was vain. The fair corse was recovered, but life was extinct. Poor Jessy's prediction was verified to the letter; and the brother and his favourite sister never met again.

A COUNTRY BARBER.

In the little primitive town of Cranley, where I spent the first few years of my life—a town which, but for the distinction of a market and a post-office, might have passed for a moderately-sized village—the houses in that part of the great western road which passed through it, were so tumbled about, so intermixed with garden walls, garden palings, and garden hedges, to say nothing of stables, farm-yards, pigsties, and barns, that it derogated nothing from the dignity of the handsome and commodious dwelling in which I had the honour to be born, that its next-door neighbour was a barber's shop, a real, genuine, old-fashioned barber's shop, consisting of a low-browed cottage, with a pole before it; a basin, as bright as Mambrino's helmet, in the window; a half-hatch always open, through which was visible a little dusty hole, where a few wigs, on battered wooden blocks, were ranged round a comfortable shaving chair; and a legend over the door, in which "William Skinner, wig-maker, hair-dresser, and barber," was set forth in yellow letters on a blue ground. I left Cranley before I was four years old; and next to a certain huge wax-doll, called Sophy, who died the usual death of wax-dolls, by falling out of the nursery-window, the most vivid and the pleasantest of my early recollections is our good neighbour Will Skinner—for by that endearing abbreviation he was called

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every where but in his own inscription. So agreeable, indeed, is the impression which he has left on my memory, that although, doubtless, the he-people find it more convenient to shave themselves, and to dispense with wigs and powder, yet I cannot help regretting, the more for his sake, the decline and extinction of a race, which, besides figuring so notably in the old novels and comedies, formed so genial a link between the higher and lower orders of society; supplying to the rich the most familiar of followers and most harmless of gossips.

It certainly was not Will Skinner's beauty that caught my fancy. His person was hardly of the kind to win a lady's favour, even although that lady were only four years of age. He was an elderly man, with an infirm feeble step, which gave him the air of being older than he was; a lank, long, stooping figure, which seemed wavering in the wind like a powder-puff; a spare wrinkled visage, with the tremulous appearance about the mouth and cheeks which results from extreme thinness; a pale complexion; scanty white hair; and a beard considerably longer than beseemed his craft.

Neither did his apparel serve greatly to set off his lean and wrinkled person. It was usually composed within-doors of a faded linen jacket; without, of a grey pepper-and-salt coat, repaired with black; both somewhat the worse for wear; both "a world too wide for his shrunk" sides, and both well covered with powder. Dusty as a miller was Will Skinner. Even the hat, which by frequent reverential applications of his finger and thumb, had become moulded into a perpetual form of salutation, was almost as richly frosted as a churchwarden's wig. Add to this a white apron, with a comb sticking out of the pocket; shoes clumsily patched—poor Will was his own cobbler; blue stockings, indifferently darned—he was to boot his own sempstress; and a ragged white cravat, marvellously badly ironed—for he was also his own washerwoman; and the picture will be complete.

Good old man! I see him in my mind's eye at this moment;

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lean, wrinkled, shabby, poor, slow of speech, and ungainly of aspect; yet pleasant to look at and delightful to recollect, in spite of rags, ugliness, age, and poverty. It was the contented expression of his withered countenance, the cheerful humility of his deportment, and the overflowing kindness of his temper, that rendered Will Skinner so general a favourite. There was nothing within his small power that he was not ready to undertake for any body. At home in every house, and conversant in every business, he was the universal help of the place. Poor he was certainly, as poor as well could be, and lonely; for he had been crossed in love in his youth, and lived alone in his little tenement, with no other companions than his wig-blocks and a tame starling ("pretty company" he used to call them); but destitute as he was of worldly goods, and although people loved to talk of him with a kind of gentle pity, I have always considered him as one of the happiest persons of my acquaintance; one "who suffered all as suffering nothing;" a philosopher rather of temperament than of reason; "the only man in the parish," as mine host of the Swan used to observe, "who was foolish enough to take a drink of small-beer as thankfully as a draught of double ale."

His fortunes had, at one time, assumed a more flourishing aspect. Our little insignificant town was one of the richest livings in England, and had been held by the Bishop of * * *, in conjunction with his very poor see. He resided nearly half the year at Cranley Rectory, and was the strenuous friend and patron of our friend Will. A most orthodox person at all points was the Bishop, portly, comely, and important; one who had won his way to the Bench by learning and merit, and was rather more finical about his episcopal decorations, and more jealous of his episcopal dignity, than a man early accustomed to artificial distinctions is apt to be. He omitted no opportunity of rustling and bustling in a silk apron; assumed the lawn sleeves whenever it was possible to introduce

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those inconvenient but pleasant appendages to the clerical costume; and was so precise in the article of perukes, as to have had one constructed in London on the exact model of the caxon worn by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, which our orthodox divine appears to have considered as a sort of regulation wig. Now this magnificent cauliflower (for such it was) had never been frosted to his Lordship's satisfaction until it came under the hands of Will Skinner, who was immediately appointed his shaver, wig-dresser, and wig-maker in ordinary, and recommended by him to all the beards and caxons in the neighbourhood. Nor did the kindness of his right reverend patron end here. Pleased with his barber's simplicity and decency of demeanour, as well as with the zealous manner in which he led the psalmody at church, quivering forth in a high thin voice the strains of Hopkins and Sternhold, the good Bishop determined to promote him in that line; appointed him to the sextonship which happened to fall vacant; and caused him to officiate as deputy to David Hunt, the parish-clerk—a man of eighty, worn out in the service, and now bed-ridden with the rheumatism—with a complete understanding that he should succeed to the post, as soon as David was fairly deposited in the church-yard. These were comfortable prospects. But, alas! the Bishop, a hale man of sixty, happened to die first; and his successor in the rectory, a little thin, bald-headed person, as sharp as a needle, who shaved himself and wore no wigs, took such disgust at certain small irregularities, such as marking the evening lessons instead of the morning, forgetting to say Amen in the proper place, and other mistakes committed in his trepidation by the clerk-deputy when the new incumbent came to read in, that, instead of the translation to a higher post, which poor Will anticipated, he was within an ace of losing his sextonship, which he was only permitted to retain, on condition of never raising his voice again in a stave so long as he lived; the rector, a musical amateur, having been so excruciated by Will's

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singing, as to be fain to stop his ears. Thus ended all his hopes of church preferment.

After this disaster, the world began to go ill with him. People learnt to shave themselves, that was a great evil; they took to wearing their own hair, that was a greater; and when the French Revolution and cropped heads came into fashion, and powder and hair-dressing went out, such was the defalcation of his customers, and the desolate state of his trade, that poor Will, in spite of the smallness of his wants and the equanimity of his spirit, found himself nearly at his wit's end. In this dilemma he resolved to turn his hand to other employments; and living in the neighbourhood of a famous trout stream, and becoming possessed of a tattered copy of Izaak Walton's Complete Angler, he applied himself to the construction of artificial flies; in which delicate manufacture, facilitated doubtless by his dexterity in wig-weaving, he soon became deservedly eminent.

This occupation he usually followed in his territory, the church-yard, as pleasant a place to be buried in as heart could desire, occupying a gentle eminence by the side of Cranley Down, on which the cricketers of that cricketing country used to muster two elevens for practice, almost every fine evening, from Easter to Michaelmas. Thither Will, who had been a cricketer himself in his youth, and still loved the wind of a ball, used to resort on summer afternoons; perching himself on a large square raised monument, whose very inscription was worn away, a spreading lime-tree above his head, Izaak Walton before him, and his implements of trade at his side. I never read that delicious book without remembering how Will Skinner used to study it. Skipping the fine pastoral poetry, and still more poetical prose of the dialogues, and poring over the notes, as a housekeeper pores over the receipts in the Cook's Oracle, or a journeyman apothecary applies himself to the London Pharmacopeia. Curious directions of a truth they were, and curiously followed. The very list

of materials had in it something striking and outlandish; camel's hair, badger's hair, hog's wool, seal's fir, cock's hackles, a heron's neck, a starling's wing, a mallard's tail, and the crest of a peacock!

These, and a thousand such knick-knacks, a wilderness of fur and feather, were ranged beside him, with real nicety, but seeming confusion; and mingled with flies, finished or in progress, and with homelier and more familiar tools, hooks, bristles, shoemaker's-wax, needles, scissars, marking silk of all colours, and "barge sail for dubbing." And there he sat, now manufacturing a cannon-fly, "dubbing it with black wool, and Isabella-coloured mohair, and bright brownish bear's hair, warped on with yellow silk, shaping the wings of the feather of a woodcock's wing, and working the head of an ash colour," and now watching Tom Taylor's unparagoned bowling, or throwing away the half-dubbed cannon-fly, in admiration of Jem Willis's hits.

On this spot our intimacy commenced. A spoilt child and an only child, it was my delight to escape from nurse and nursery, and all the restraint of female management, and to follow every where the dear papa, my chief spoiler, who so fully returned my partiality, as to have a little pad constructed on which I used to accompany him in his excursions on horseback.

The only place at which his fondness ever allowed him to think my presence burthensome was the cricket ground, to which I used regularly to follow him in spite of all remonstrance and precaution, causing him no small perplexity, as to how to bestow me in safety during the game. Will and the mounment seemed to offer exactly the desired refuge, and our good neighbour readily consented to fill the post of deputy nursery-maid for the time, assisted in his superintendence by a very beautiful and sagacious black Newfoundland dog, called Coe, who partly from a sense of duty, and partly from personal affection, used when out to take me under his particular care,

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and mounted guard over the monument as well as Will Skinner, who assuredly required all the aid that could be mustered to cope with my vagaries.

Poor dear old man, what a life I led him !—now playing at bo-peep on one side of the great monument, and now on the other; now crawling away amongst the green graves; now starting up between two head-stones; now shouting in triumph with my small childish voice, from the low churchyard wall; now gliding round before him, and laughing up in his face as he sat. Poor dear old man! with what undeviating good humour did he endure my naughtiness! How he would catch me away from the very shadow of danger if a ball came near! and how often did he interrupt his own labours to forward my amusement, sliding from his perch to gather lime branches to stick in Coe's collar, or to collect daisies, buttercups, or ragged-robins, to make what I used to call daisy-beds for my doll.

Perhaps there might be a little self-defence in this last-mentioned kindness; the picking to pieces of flowers and making of daisy-beds being, as Will well knew, the most efficacious means of hindering me from picking to pieces his oak-flies or May-flies; or, which was still worse, of constructing others after my own fashion out of his materials; which, with a spirit of imitation as innocently mischievous as a monkey, I used to purloin for the purpose the moment his back was turned, mixing marten's fur and otter's fur, and dipping my little fingers amongst brown and red hackles, with an audacity that would have tried the patience of Job. How Will's held out I cannot imagine! but he never got further than a very earnest supplication that I would give over helping him, a deprecation of my assistance, a "pray don't, dear Miss!" that on remembering the provocation seems to me a forbearance surpassing that of Grisildis. What is the desertion of a good-for-nothing husband, and even the cooking his second wedding dinner, (so I believe the story runs,) compared to seeing an elf of four

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years old mixing and oversetting the thousand and one materials of fly-making! Old Chaucer hath made the most of it, but in point of patience Grisildis was nothing to Will Skinner.

And yet, to do myself justice, my intentions towards my friend the fly-maker were perfectly friendly. Mischievous as I undoubtedly was, I did not intend to do mischief. If I filched *from* him, I filched *for* him; courted the cook for pheasant and partridge feathers; begged the old jays and blackbirds which were hung up in terrorem in the cherry-trees from the gardener; dragged a great bit of Turkey carpet to the church-yard because I had heard him say that it made good dubbing; got into a *démêlé* with a peacock in the neighbourhood from seizing a piece of his tail to form the bodies of Will's dragon-flies; and had an affair with a pig, in an attempt to procure that staple commodity, hog's down. N. B. The hog had the better of that battle; and but for the intervention of my friend Coe, who seeing the animal in chase of me, ran to the rescue, and pulled him back by the tail, I might have rued my attack upon those pig's ears (for behind them grows the commodity in question) to this very hour.

Besides the torment that I unconsciously gave him, poor Will had not always reason to congratulate himself on the acquaintance of my faithful follower, Coe. He was, as I have said, a dog of great accomplishment and sagacity, and possessed in perfection all the tricks, which boys and servants love so well to teach to this docile and noble race. Now it so happened that our barber, in the general defalcation of wig-wearers at Cranley, retained one constant customer, a wealthy grocer, who had been churchwarden ever since the Bishop's time, and still emulated that regretted prelate in the magnificence of his peruke; wearing a caxon such as I have seldom seen on any head, except that of Mr. Fawcett on the stage, and of Dr. Parr off.

Mr. Samuel Saunders, such was the name of our church-warden, having had the calamity to lose a wife whom he had

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wedded some forty years before, was, as the talk went, paying his addresses to pretty Jenny Wren, the bar-maid at the Swan. Samuel was a thick, short, burly person, with a red nose, a red waistcoat, and a cinnamon-coloured coat, altogether a very proper wearer of the buzz wig. If all the men in Cranley could have been ranged in a row, the wig would have been assigned to him, in right of look and demeanour, just as the hats in one corner of Hogarth's print, The Election Ball, can be put each on the proper head without difficulty. The man and the wig matched each other. Now Jenny Wren was no match for either. She was a pretty, airy, jaunty girl, with a merry hazel eye, a ready smile, and a nimble tongue, the arrantest flirt in Cranley, talking to every beau in the parish, but listening only to tall Thomas, our handsome groom.

An ill match for Samuel Saunders at sixty, or for Samuel Saunders's wig, was the pretty coquette Jenny Wren at eighteen! The disparity was painful to think of. But it was the old story. Samuel was wealthy and Jenny poor; and uncles, aunts, friends, and cousins coaxed and remonstrated; and poor Jenny pouted and cried, and vowed fifty times a day that she would not marry him if he were fifty times as rich; till, at length, worn out by importunity, exhausted by the violence of her own opposition, offended by the supineness of her favourite lover, and perhaps a little moved by the splendour of the churchwarden's presents, she began to relent, and finally consented to the union.

The match was now talked of as certain by all the gossips in Cranley,—some had even gone so far as to fix the wedding-day; when one evening our handsome groom, tall Thomas, poor Jenny's favourite beau, passing by Will Skinner's shop, followed by Coe, saw a new wig of Samuel Saunders's pattern, doubtless the identical wedding wig, reposing in full friz on one of the battered wooden blocks. "Hie, Coe!" said Thomas, making a sign with his hand; and in an instant Coe had sprung over the half-hatch into the vacant shop, had

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seized the well-powdered perriwig, and in another instant returned with it into the street, and followed Thomas, wig in mouth, into the little bar at the Swan, where sat Mr. Samuel Saunders, making love to Jenny Wren.

The sudden apparition of his wig, borne in so unexpected a manner, wholly discomfited the unlucky suitor, and even dumbfounded his fair mistress. "Hie, Coe! hie!" repeated Thomas, and, at the word, Coe, letting drop the first caxon, sprang upon that living block, Samuel Saunders's noddle, snatched off the other wig, and deposited both his trophies at Jenny's feet!—a catastrophe, which was followed in less than a month by the marriage of the handsome groom and the pretty bar-maid; for the churchwarden, who had withstood all other rebuffs, was driven for ever from the field by the peals of laughter, which, after the first surprise was over, burst irrepressibly from both the lovers. In less than a month they were married; and Will Skinner and Coe, who had hitherto avoided each other by mutual consent, met as guests at the wedding-dinner; and through the good offices of the bridegroom, were completely and permanently reconciled; Coe's consciousness being far more difficult to conquer than the short-lived anger of the most placable of barbers.

OUR MAYING.

As party produces party, and festival brings forth festival, in higher life, so one scene of rural festivity is pretty sure to be followed by another. The boys' cricket-match at Whitsuntide, which was won most triumphantly by our parish, and luckily passed off without giving cause for a coroner's inquest, or indeed without injury of any sort, except the demolition of Amos Stone's new straw-hat, the crown of which (Amos's head

being fortunately at a distance) was fairly struck out by the cricket-ball; this match produced one between our eleven and the players of the neighbouring hamlet of Whitley; and being patronized by the young lord of the manor and several of the gentry round, and followed by jumping in sacks, riding donkey-races, grinning through horse-collars, and other diversions more renowned for their antiquity than their elegance, gave such general satisfaction, that it was resolved to hold a Maying in full form in Whitley-wood.

Now this wood of ours happens to be a common of twenty acres, with three trees on it, and the Maying was fixed to be held between hay-time and harvest; but "what 's in a name?" Whitley-wood is a beautiful piece of green sward, surrounded on three sides by fields, and farm-houses, and cottages, and woody uplands, and on the other by a fine park; and the May-house was erected and the May-games held in the beginning of July, the very season of leaves and roses, when the days are at the longest, and the weather at the finest, and the whole world is longing to get out of doors. Moreover, the whole festival was aided, not impeded, by the gentlemen amateurs, headed by that very genial person, our young lord of the manor; whilst the business part of the affair was confided to the well-known diligence, zeal, activity, and intelligence of that most popular of village landlords, mine host of the Rose. How could a Maying fail under such auspices? Every body expected more sunshine and more fun, more flowers and more laughing, than ever was known at a rustic merry-making—and really, considering the manner in which expectation had been raised, the quantity of disappointment has been astonishingly small.

Landlord Sims, the master of the revels, and our very good neighbour, is a portly, bustling man, of five-and-forty, or thereabout, with a hale, jovial visage, a merry eye, a pleasant smile, and a general air of good-fellowship. This last qualification, whilst it serves greatly to recommend his ale, is apt

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to mislead superficial observers, who generally account him a sort of a slenderer Boniface, and imagine that, like that renowned hero of the spiggot, Master Sims eats, drinks, and sleeps on his own anno domini. They were never more mistaken in their lives; no soberer man than Master Sims within twenty miles! Except for the good of the house, he no more thinks of drinking beer, than a grocer of eating figs. To be sure when the jug lags he will take a hearty pull, just by way of example, and to set the good ale a going. But, in general, he trusts to subtler and more delicate modes of quickening its circulation. A good song, a good story, a merry jest, a hearty laugh, and a most winning habit of assentation; these are his implements. There is not a better companion, or a more judicious listener, in the county. His pliability is astonishing. He shall say yes to twenty different opinions on the same subject, within the hour; and so honest and cordial does his agreement seem, that no one of his customers, whether drunk or sober, ever dreams of doubting his sincerity. The hottest conflict of politics never puzzles him: Whig or Tory, he is both, or either—"the happy Mercutio, that curses both houses." Add to this gift of conformity, a cheerful, easy temper, an alacrity of attention, a zealous desire to please, which gives to his duties, as a landlord, all the grace of hospitality, and a perpetual civility and kindness, even when he has nothing to gain by them; and no one can wonder at Master Sims's popularity.

After his good wife's death, this popularity began to extend itself in a remarkable manner amongst the females of the neighbourhood; smitten with his portly person, his smooth, oily manner, and a certain soft, earnest, whispering voice, which he generally assumes when addressing one of the fairer sex, and which seems to make his very "how d'ye do" confidential and complimentary. Moreover, it was thought that the good landlord was well to do in the world, and though Betsy and Letty were good little girls, quick, civil, and active

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yet, poor things, what could such young girls know of a house like the Rose? All would go to rack and ruin without the eye of a mistress! Master Sims must look out for a wife. So thought the whole female world, and, apparently, Master Sims began to think so himself.

The first fair one to whom his attention was directed, was a rosy, pretty widow, a pastry-cook of the next town, who arrived in our village on a visit to her cousin, the baker, for the purpose of giving confectionery lessons to his wife. Nothing was ever so hot as that courtship. During the week that the lady of pie-crust staid, her lover almost lived in the oven. One would have thought that he was learning to make the cream tarts without pepper, by which Bedreddin Hassan regained his state and his princess. It would be a most suitable match, as all the parish agreed; the widow, for as pretty as she was, (and one sha'n't often see a pleasanter open countenance, or a sweeter smile,) being within ten years as old as her suitor, and having had two husbands already. A most proper and suitable match, said every body; and when our landlord carried her back to B. in his new-painted green cart, all the village agreed that they were gone to be married, and the ringers were just setting up a peal, when Master Sims returned alone, single, crest-fallen, dejected; the bells stopped of themselves, and we heard no more of the pretty pastry-cook. For three months after that rebuff, mine host, albeit not addicted to aversions, testified an equal dislike to women and tartlets, widows and plum-cake. Even poor Alice Taylor, whose travelling basket of lollypops and ginger-bread he had whilom patronized, was forbidden the house; and not a bun or a biscuit could be had at the Rose, for love or money.

The fit, however, wore off in time; and he began again to follow the advice of his neighbours, and to look out for a wife, up street and down; whilst at each extremity a fair object presented herself, from neither of whom had he the slightest reason to dread a repetition of the repulse which he had ex-

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perienced from the blooming widow. The down-street lady was a widow also, the portly, comely relict of our drunken village blacksmith, who, in spite of her joy at her first husband's death, and an old spite at mine host of the Rose, to whose good ale and good company she was wont to ascribe most of the aberrations of the deceased, began to find her shop, her journeymen, and her eight children, (six unruly, obstreperous Pickles of boys, and two tom-boys of girls,) rather more than a lone woman could manage, and to sigh for a helpmate to ease her of her cares, collect the boys at night, see the girls to school of a morning, break the larger imps of running away to revels and fairs, and the smaller fry of birds-nesting and orchard-robbing, and bear a part in the lectures and chastisements, which she deemed necessary to preserve the young rebels from the bad end which she predicted to them twenty times a day. Master Sims was the coadjutor on whom she had inwardly pitched; and, accordingly, she threw out broad hints to that effect, every time she encountered him, which, in the course of her search for boys and girls, who were sure to be missing at school-time and bed-time, happened pretty often; and Mr. Sims was far too gallant and too much in the habit of assenting to listen unmoved; for really the widow was a fine, tall, comely woman; and the whispers, and smiles, and hand-pressings, when they happened to meet, were becoming very tender; and his admonitions and head-shakings addressed to the young crew (who, nevertheless, all liked him) quite fatherly. This was his down-street flame.

The rival lady was Miss Lydia Day, the carpenter's sister; a slim, upright maiden, not remarkable for beauty, and not so young as she had been, who, on inheriting a small annuity from the mistress with whom she had spent the best of her days, retired to her native village to live on her means. A genteel, demure, quiet personage, was Miss Lydia Day; much addicted to snuff and green tea, and not averse from a little

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gentle scandal—for the rest, a good sort of woman, and *un très-bon parti* for Master Sims, who seemed to consider it a profitable speculation, and made love to her whenever she happened to come into his head, which, it must be confessed, was hardly so often as her merits and her annuity deserved. Remiss as he was, he had no lack of encouragement to complain of—for she "to hear would seriously incline," and put on her best silk, and her best simper, and lighted up her faded complexion into something approaching to a blush, whenever he came to visit her. And this was Master Sims's up-street love.

So stood affairs at the Rose when the day of the Maying arrived; and the double flirtation, which, however dexterously managed, must have been sometimes, one would think, rather inconvenient to the inamorato, proved on this occasion extremely useful. Each of the fair ladies contributed her aid to the festival; Miss Lydia by tying up sentimental garlands for the May-house, and scolding the carpenters into diligence in the erection of the booths; the widow by giving her whole bevy of boys and girls a holiday, and turning them loose on the neighbourhood to collect flowers as they could. Very useful auxiliaries were these light foragers; they scoured the country far and near—irresistible mendicants! pardonable thieves! coming to no harm, poor children, except that little George got a black eye in tumbling from the top of an acacia tree at the Park, and that Sam (he's a sad Pickle is Sam!) narrowly escaped a horse-whipping from the head gardener at the Hall, who detected a bunch of his new rhododendron, the only plant in the county, forming the very crown and centre of the May-pole. Little harm did they do, poor children, with all their pilfery; and when they returned, covered with their flowery loads, like the May-day figure called "Jack of the Green," they worked at the garlands and the May-houses, as none but children ever do work, putting all their young life and their untiring spirit of noise and motion into their

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pleasant labour. Oh, the din of that building! Talk of the Tower of Babel! that was a quiet piece of masonry compared to the May-house of Whitley-wood, with its walls of leaves and flowers—and its canvass booths at either end for refreshments and musicians. Never was known more joyous note of preparation.

The morning rose more quietly—I had almost said more dully—and promised ill for the *fête*. The sky was gloomy, the wind cold, and the green filled as slowly as a balloon seems to do when one is watching it. The entertainments of the day were to begin with a cricket-match, (two elevens to be chosen on the ground,) and the wickets pitched at twelve o'clock precisely. Twelve o'clock came—but no cricketers—except, indeed, some two or three punctual and impatient gentlemen; one o'clock came, and brought no other reinforcement than two or three more of our young Etonians and Wykhamites—less punctual than their precursors, but not a whit less impatient. Very provoking, certainly—but not very uncommon. Your country cricketer, the peasant, the mere rustic, does love, on these occasions, to keep his betters waiting, if only to display his power; and when we consider that it is the one solitary opportunity in which importance can be felt and vanity gratified, we must acknowledge it to be perfectly in human nature that a few airs should be shown. Accordingly, our best players held aloof. Tom Coper would not come to the ground; Joel Brent came, indeed, but would not play; Samuel Long coquetted—he would and he would not. Very provoking, certainly! Then two young farmers, a tall brother and a short, Hampshire men, cricketers born, whose good-humour and love of the game rendered them sure cards, had been compelled to go on business—the one, ten miles south—the other, fifteen north—that very morning. No playing without the Goddards! No sign of either of them on the B—— road or the F——. Most intolerably provoking, beyond a doubt! Master Sims tried his best coaxing and

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his best double X on the recusant players; but all in vain. In short, there was great danger of the match going off altogether; when, about two o'clock, Amos Stone, who was there with the crown of his straw hat sewed in wrong side outward—new thatched, as it were—and who had been set to watch the B—— highway, gave notice that something was coming as tall as the Maypole—which something turning out to be the long Goddard, and his brother approaching at the same moment in the opposite direction, hope, gaiety, and good-humour revived again; and two elevens, including Amos and another urchin of his calibre, were formed on the spot.

I never saw a prettier match. The gentlemen, the Goddards, and the boys being equally divided, the strength and luck of the parties were so well balanced, that it produced quite a neck-and-neck race, won only by two notches. Amos was completely the hero of the day, standing out half of his side, and getting five notches at one hit. His side lost—but so many of his opponents gave him their ribands, (have not I said that Master Sims bestowed a set of ribands?) that the straw hat was quite covered with purple trophies; and Amos, stalking about the ground, with a shy and awkward vanity, looked with his decorations like the sole conqueror—the Alexander or Napoleon of the day. The boy did not speak a word; but every now and then he displayed a set of huge white teeth in a grin of inexpressible delight. By far the happiest and proudest personage of that Maying was Amos Stone.

By the time the cricket-match was over, the world began to be gay at Whitley-wood. Carts and gigs, and horses and carriages, and people of all sorts, arrived from all quarters; and, lastly, "the blessed sun himself" made his appearance, adding a triple lustre to the scene. Fiddlers, ballad-singers, cake baskets—Punch—Master Frost, crying cherries—a Frenchman with dancing dogs—a Bavarian woman selling

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brooms—half-a-dozen stalls with fruit and frippery—and twenty noisy games of quoits, and bowls, and ninepins—boys throwing at boxes—girls playing at ball—gave to the assemblage the bustle, clatter, and gaiety of a Dutch fair, as one sees it in Teniers' pictures. Plenty of drinking and smoking on the green—plenty of eating in the booths: the gentlemen cricketers, at one end, dining off a round of beef, which made the table totter—the players, at the other, supping off a gammon of bacon—Amos Stone crammed at both—and Landlord Sims bustling every where with an activity that seemed to confer upon him the gift of ubiquity, assisted by the little light-footed maidens, his daughters, all smiles and curtsies, and by a pretty black-eyed young woman—name unknown—with whom, even in the midst of his hurry, he found time, as it seemed to me, for a little philandering. What would the widow and Miss Lydia have said? But they remained in happy ignorance—the one drinking tea in most decorous primness in a distant marquée, disliking to mingle with so mixed an assembly—the other in full chase after the most unlucky of all her urchins, the boy called Sam, who had gotten into a *démêlé* with a showman, in consequence of mimicking the wooden gentleman Punch, and his wife Judy—thus, as the showman observed, bringing his exhibition into disrepute.

Meanwhile, the band struck up in the May-house, and the dance, after a little demur, was fairly set afloat—an honest English country dance—(there had been some danger of waltzing and quadrilling)—with ladies and gentlemen at the top, and country lads and lasses at the bottom; a happy mixture of cordial kindness on the one hand, and pleased respect on the other. It was droll though to see the beplumed and beflowered French hats, the silks and the furbelows, sailing and rustling amidst the straw bonnets and cotton gowns of the humbler dancers; and not less so to catch a glimpse of the little lame clerk, shabbier than ever, peeping through the canvass opening of the booth, with a grin of ineffable delight,

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over the shoulder of our vicar's pretty wife. Really, considering that Mabel Green and Jem Tanner were standing together at that moment at the top of the set, so deeply engaged in making love that they forgot when they ought to begin, and that the little clerk must have seen them, I cannot help taking his grin for a favourable omen to those faithful lovers.

Well, the dance finished, the sun went down, and we departed. The Maying is over, the booths carried away, and the May-house demolished. Every thing has fallen into its old position, except the love affairs of Landlord Sims. The pretty lass with the black eyes, who first made her appearance at Whitley-wood, is actually staying at the Rose Inn, on a visit to his daughters; and the village talk goes that she is to be the mistress of that thriving hostelry, and the wife of its master; and both her rivals are jealous, after their several fashions—the widow in the tantrums, the maiden in the dumps. Nobody knows exactly who the black-eyed damsel may be,—but she's young, and pretty, and civil, and modest; and, without intending to depreciate the merits of either of her competitors, I cannot help thinking that our good neighbour has shown his taste.

AN ADMIRAL ON SHORE.

I do not know any moment in which the two undelightful truisms which we are all so ready to admit and to run away from, the quick progress of time and the instability of human events, are brought before us with a more uncomfortable consciousness than that of visiting, after a long absence, a house with whose former inhabitants we have been on terms of intimacy. The feeling is still more unpleasant when it comes

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to us unexpectedly and finds us unprepared, as has happened to me to-day.

A friend requested me this morning to accompany her to call on her little girl, whom she had recently placed at the Belvidere, a new and celebrated boarding-school—I beg pardon!—establishment for young ladies, about ten miles off. We set out accordingly, and, my friend being a sort of person in whose company one is apt to think little of any thing but herself, had proceeded to the very gate of the Belvidere before I had at all recollected the road we were travelling, when in our momentary stop at the entrance of the lawn, I at once recognised the large substantial mansion, surrounded by magnificent oaks and elms, whose shadow lay broad and heavy on the grass in the bright sun of August; the copse-like shrubbery, which sunk with a pretty natural wildness to a dark clear pool, the ha ha, which parted the pleasure-ground from the open common, and the beautiful country which lay like a panorama beyond—in a word, I knew at a glance, in spite of the disguise of its new appellation, the White House at Hannonby, where ten years ago I had so often visited my good old friend Admiral Floyd.

The place had undergone other transmogrifications besides its change of name; in particular, it had gained a few prettinesses and had lost much tidiness. A new rustic bench, a green-house, and a verandah, may be laid to the former score; a torn book left littering on the seat, a broken swing dangling from the trees, a skipping-rope on the grass, and a straw bonnet on a rose bush, to the latter; besides which, the lawn which, under the naval reign, had been kept almost as smooth as water, was now in complete neglect, the turf in some places growing into grass, in others trodden quite bare by the continual movement of little rapid feet; leaves lay under the trees; weeds were on the gravel; and dust upon the steps. And in two or three chosen spots small fairy gardens had been cribbed from the shrubberies, where seedy mignonette, and

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languishing sweet peas, and myrtles over-watered, and geraniums, trained as never geraniums were trained before, gave manifest tokens of youthful gardening. None of the inhabitants were visible, but it was evidently a place gay and busy with children, devoted to their sports and their exercise. As we neared the mansion, the sounds and sights of school-keeping became more obvious. Two or three pianos were jingling in different rooms, a guitar tinkling, and a harp twanging; a din of childish voices, partly French partly English, issued from one end of the house; and a foreign-looking figure advanced from the other; whom, from his silk stockings, his upright carriage, and the boy who followed him carrying his kit, I set down for the dancing-master; whilst in an upstair apartment were two or three rosy laughing faces, enjoying the pleasure of disobedience in peeping out of window, one of which faces disappeared the moment it caught sight of the carriage, and was in another instant hanging round its mother's neck in the hall. I could not help observing to the governess, who also met us there, that it was quite shocking to think how often disobedience prospers amongst these little people. If Miss Emily had not been peeping out of the window when we drove up to the door, she would have been at least two minutes later in kissing her dear mamma—a remark to which the little girl assented very heartily, and at which her accomplished preceptress tried to look grave.

Leaving Emily with her mother, I sallied forth on the lawn to reconnoitre old scenes and recollect old times. My first visit especially forced itself on my remembrance. It had been made, like this, under the sultry August sun. We then lived within walking distance, and I had been proceeding hither to call on our new neighbours, Admiral and Mrs. Floyd, when a very unaccountable noise on the lawn induced me to pause at the entrance; a moment's observation explained the nature of the sounds. The admiral was shooting wasps with a pocket pistol; a most villanous amusement, as it seemed to me, who

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am by nature and habit a hater of such poppery, and indeed of all noises which are at once sudden and expected. My first impulse was to run away, and I had actually made some motions towards a retreat, when, struck with the ludicrous nature of the sport, and the folly of being frightened at a sort of squibbery, which even the unusual game (though the admiral was a capital marksman, and seldom failed to knock down his insect) did not seem to regard, I faced about manfully, and contenting myself with putting my hands to my ears to keep out the sound, remained at a very safe distance to survey the scene. There, under the shade of the tall elms, sat the veteran, a little old withered man, very like a pocket pistol himself, brown, succinct, grave, and fiery. He wore an old-fashioned naval uniform of blue, faced with white, which set off his mahogany countenance, drawn into a thousand deep wrinkles, so that his face was as full of lines as if it had been tattoöed, with the full force of contrast. At his side stood a very tall, masculine, large-boned, middle-aged woman, something like a man in petticoats, whose face, in spite of a quantity of rouge and a small portion of modest assurance, might still be called handsome, and could never be mistaken for belonging to other than an Irishwoman. There was a touch of the brogue in her very look. She, evidently his wife, stood by marking the coveys, and enjoying, as it seemed to me, the smell of gunpowder, to which she had the air of being quite as well accustomed as the admiral. A younger lady was watching them at a little distance, apparently as much amused as myself, and far less frightened; on her advancing to meet me the pistol was put down, and the admiral joined us. This was my first introduction: we were acquainted in a moment; and before the end of my visit he had shown me all over his house, and told me the whole history of his life and adventures.

In these there was nothing remarkable, excepting their being so entirely of the sea. Some sixty-five years before, he

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had come into the world in the middle of the British Channel, while his mother was taking a little trip from Portsmouth to Plymouth on board her husband's flag-ship, (for he, too, had been an admiral,) when, rather before he was expected, our admiral was born. This *début* fixed his destiny. At twelve years old he went to sea, and had remained there ever since, till now, when an unlucky promotion sent him ashore, and seemed likely to keep him there. I never saw a man so unaffectedly displeased with his own title. He forbade any of his family from calling him by it, and took it as a sort of affront from strangers.

Being, however, on land, his first object was to make his residence as much like a man-of-war as possible, or rather as much like that *beau-idéal* of a habitation his last frigate, the Mermaiden, in which he had by different prizes made above sixty thousand pounds. By that standard his calculations were regulated; all the furniture of the White House at Hannonby was adapted to the proportions of his Majesty's ship the Mermaiden. The great drawing-room was fitted up exactly on the model of her cabin, and the whole of that spacious and commodious mansion made to resemble, as much as possible, that wonderfully inconvenient abode, the inside of a ship; every thing crammed into the smallest possible compass; space most unnecessarily economized, and contrivances devised for all those matters, which need no contriving at all. He victualled the house as for an East-India voyage, served out the provisions in rations, and swung the whole family in hammocks.

It will easily be believed that these innovations, in a small village in a midland county, where nineteen-twentieths of the inhabitants had never seen a piece of water larger than Hannonby great pond, occasioned no small commotion. The poor admiral had his own troubles. At first every living thing about the place rebelled—there was a general mutiny; the very cocks and hens whom he had crammed up in coops in

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the poultry-yard screamed about for liberty; and the pigs, ducks, and geese, equally prisoners, squeaked and gabbled for water; the cows lowed in their stall—the sheep bleated in their pens, the whole live stock of Hannonby was in durance.

The most unmanageable of these complainers were of course the servants: with the men, after a little while, he got on tolerably, sternness and grog (the wind and the sun of the fable) conquered them; his staunchest opponents were of the other sex, the whole tribe of housemaids and kitchenmaids abhorred him to a woman, and plagued and thwarted him every hour of the day. He, on his part, returned their aversion with interest; talked of female stupidity, female awkwardness, and female dirt, and threatened to compound an household of the crew of the Mermaiden, that should shame all the twirlers of mops and brandishers of brooms in the county. Especially, he used to vaunt the abilities of a certain Bill Jones, as the best laundress, sempstress, cook, and housemaid in the navy; him he was determined to procure, to keep his refractory household in some order; accordingly, he wrote to desire his presence; and Bill, unable to resist the summons of his old commander, arrived accordingly.

This Avatar, which had been anticipated by the revolted damsels with no small dismay, tended considerably to ameliorate matters. The dreaded major domo turned out to be a smart young sailor, of four or five and twenty, with an arch smile, a bright merry eye, and a most knowing nod, by no means insensible to female objurgation or indifferent to female charms. The women of the house, particularly the pretty ones, soon perceived their power; and as this Admiral Crichton of his Majesty's ship the Mermaiden had, amongst his other accomplishments, the address completely to govern his master, all was soon in the smoothest track possible. Neither, universal genius though he were, was Bill Jones at all disdainful of female assistance, or averse to the theory of a division of labour. Under his wise direction and discreet

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patronage, a peace was patched up between the admiral and his rebellious handmaids. A general amnesty was proclaimed, with the solitary exception of an old crone of a she-cook, who had, on some occasion of culinary interference, turned her master out of his own kitchen, and garnished Bill Jones's jacket with an unseemly rag yclept a dish-clout. She was dismissed by mutual consent; and Sally the kitchenmaid, a pretty black-eyed girl, promoted to the vacant post, which she filled with eminent ability.

Soothed, guided, and humoured by his trusty adherent, and influenced perhaps a little by the force of example and the effect of the land breeze, which he had never breathed so long before, our worthy veteran soon began to show symptoms of a man of this world. The earth became, so to say, his native element. He took to gardening, to farming, for which Bill Jones had also a taste! set free his prisoners in the *basse-cour,* to the unutterable glorification and crowing of cock and hen, and cackling and gabbling of goose and turkey, and enlarged his own walk from pacing backwards and forwards in the dining-room, followed by his old shipmates, a Newfoundland dog and a tame goat, into a stroll round his own grounds, to the great delight of those faithful attendants. He even talked of going pheasant shooting, bought a hunter, and was only saved from following the fox-hounds by accidentally taking up Peregrine Pickle, which, by a kind of *sortes Virgilianæ,* opened on the mischances of Lieutenant Hatchway and Commodore Trunnion in a similar expedition.

After this warning, which he considered as nothing less than providential, he relinquished any attempt at mounting that formidable animal, a horse, but having found his land legs, he was afoot all day long in his farm or his garden, setting people to rights in all quarters, and keeping up the place with the same scrupulous nicety that he was wont to bestow on the planks and rigging of his dear Mermaiden. Amongst the country people, he soon became popular. They liked the

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testy little gentleman, who dispensed his beer and grog so bountifully, and talked to them so freely. He would have his own way, to be sure, but then he paid for it; besides, he entered into their tastes and amusements, promoted May-games, revels, and other country sports, patronized dancing-dogs and monkeys, and bespoke plays in barns. Above all, he had an exceeding partiality to vagrants, strollers, gipsies, and such like persons; listened to their tales with a delightful simplicity of belief; pitied them; relieved them; fought their battles at the bench and the vestry, and got into two or three scrapes with the constables and magistrates, by the activity of his protection. Only one counterfeit sailor with a sham wooden-leg, he found out at a question, and, by aid of Bill Jones, ducked in the horse-pond, for an impostor, till the unlucky wretch, who was, as the worthy seaman suspected, totally unused to the water, a thorough land-lubber, was nearly drowned; an adventure which turned out the luckiest of his life, he having carried his case to an attorney, who forced the admiral to pay fifty pounds for the exploit.

Our good veteran was equally popular amongst the gentry of the neighbourhood. His own hospitality was irresistible, and his frankness and simplicity, mixed with a sort of petulant vivacity, combined to make him a most welcome relief to the dulness of a country dinner party. He enjoyed society extremely, and even had a spare bed erected for company; moved thereunto by an accident which befell the fat Rector of Kinton, who having unfortunately consented to sleep at Hannonby one wet night, had alarmed the whole house, and nearly broken his own neck, by a fall from his hammock. The admiral would have put up twenty spare beds, if he could have been sure of filling them, for besides his natural sociability, he was, it must be confessed, in spite of his farming, and gardening, and keeping a log-book, a good deal at a loss how to fill up his time. His reading was none of the most extensive: Robinson Crusoe, the Naval Chronicle,

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Southey's admirable Life of Nelson, and Smollet's Novels, formed the greater part of his library; and for other books he cared little; though he liked well enough to pore over maps and charts, and to look at modern voyages, especially if written by landsmen or ladies; and his remarks on those occasions often displayed a talent for criticism, which, under different circumstances, might have ripened into a very considerable reviewer.

For the rest, he was a most kind and excellent person, although a little testy and not a little absolute; and a capital disciplinarian, although addicted to the reverse sins of making other people tipsy whilst he kept himself sober, and of sending forth oaths in volleys whilst he suffered none other to swear. He had besides a few prejudices incident to his condition—loved his country to the point of hating all the rest of the world, especially the French; and regarded his own profession with a pride which made him intolerant of every other. To the army he had an intense and growing hatred, much augmented since victory upon victory had deprived him of the comfortable feeling of scorn. The battle of Waterloo fairly posed him. "To be sure, to have drubbed the French was a fine thing—a very fine thing—no denying that! but why not have fought out the quarrel by sea?"

I made no mention of Mrs. Floyd in enumerating the admiral's domestic arrangements, because, sooth to say, no one could have less concern in them than that good lady. She had not been Mrs. Floyd for five and twenty years without thoroughly understanding her husband's despotic humour, and her own light and happy temper enabled her to conform to it without the slightest appearance of reluctance or discontent. She liked to be managed—it saved her trouble. She turned out to be Irish, as I had suspected. The admiral, who had reached the age of forty without betraying the slightest symptoms of matrimony, had, during a sojourn in Cork Harbour, fallen in love with her, then a buxom widow, and

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married her in something less than three weeks after their acquaintance began, chiefly moved to that unexpected proceeding by the firmness with which she bore a salute to the Lord Lieutenant which threw half the ladies on board into hysterics.

Mrs. Floyd was indeed as gallant a woman as ever stood fire. Her first husband had been an officer in the army, and she had followed the camp during two campaigns; had been in one battle and several skirmishes, and had been taken and retaken with the carriages and baggage without betraying the slightest symptom of fear. Her naval career did not shame her military reputation. She lived chiefly on board, adopted sea phrases and sea customs, and but for the petticoat might have passed for a sailor herself.

And of all the sailors that ever lived, she was the merriest, the most generous, the most unselfish; the very kindest of that kindest race! There was no getting away from her hearty hospitality, no escaping her prodigality of presents. It was dangerous to praise or even to approve of any thing belonging to herself in her hearing; if it had been the carpet under her feet or the shawl on her shoulders, either would instantly have been stripped off to offer. Then her exquisite good humour! Coarse and boisterous she certainly was, and terribly Irish; but the severest stickler for female decorum, the nicest critic of female manners, would have been disarmed by the contagion of Mrs. Floyd's good-humour.

My chief friend and favourite of the family was however one who hardly seemed to belong to it—Anne, the eldest daughter. I liked her even better than I did her father and mother, although for very different qualities. She was "inland bred," and combined in herself sufficient self-possession and knowledge of the world, of literature, and of society, to have set up the whole house, provided it had been possible to supply their deficiency from her superabundance; she was three or four and twenty, too, past the age of mere young ladyism,

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and entirely unaccomplished, if she could be called so, who joined to the most elegant manners a highly cultivated understanding and a remarkable talent for conversation. Nothing could exceed the fascination of her delicate and poignant raillery, her voice and smile were so sweet, and her wit so light and glancing. She had the still rarer merit of being either entirely free from vanity, or of keeping it in such good order, that it never appeared in look or word. Conversation, much as she excelled in it, was not necessary to her, as it is to most eminent talkers. I think she enjoyed quiet observation full as much, if not more; and at such times there was something of good-humoured malice in her bright hazel eye, that spoke more than she ever allowed her tongue to utter. Her father's odd ways, for instance, and her mother's odd speeches, and her sister's lack-a-daisicalness, amused her rather more than they ought to have done; but she had never lived with them, having been brought up by an aunt who had recently died, leaving her a splendid fortune; and even now that she had come to reside at home, was treated by her parents, although very kindly, rather as an honoured guest than a cherished daughter.

Anne Floyd was a sweet creature in spite of a little over-acuteness. I used to think she wanted nothing but falling in love to soften her proud spirit, and tame her bright eye; but falling in love was quite out of her way—she had the unfortunate distrust of an heiress, satiated with professions of attachment, and suspecting every man of wooing her fortune rather than herself. By dint of hearing exaggerated praise of her beauty, she had even come to think herself plain; perhaps another circumstance a little contributed to this persuasion—she was said to be, and undoubtedly was, remarkably like her father. There is no accounting for the strange freaks that nature plays in the matter of family likeness. The admiral was certainly as ugly a little man as one should see in a summer day, and Anne was as certainly a very pretty young

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woman; yet it was quite impossible to see them together and not be struck with the extreme and even absurd resemblance between his old battered face and her bright and sparkling countenance. To have been so like my good friend the admiral might have cured a lighter spirit of vanity.

Julia, the younger and favourite daughter, was a fine tall handsome girl of nineteen, just what her mother must have been at the same age; she had been entirely brought up by Mrs. Floyd, except when deposited from time to time in various country boarding-schools, whilst that good lady enjoyed the pleasure of a cruise. Miss Julia exhibited the not uncommon phenomenon of having imbibed the opposite faults to those of her instructress, and was soft, mincing, languid, affected, and full of airs and graces of the very worst sort; but I don't know that she was much more ignorant and silly than a girl of nineteen, with a neglected education, must needs be; and she had the further excuse of being a spoiled child. Her father doted upon her, and thought her the most accomplished young woman of the age; for certain, she could play a little, and sing a little, and paint a little, and talk a little very bad French, and dance and dress a great deal. She had also cultivated her mind by reading all the love-stories and small poetry that came in her way; corresponded largely with half-a-dozen bosom friends picked up at her different seminaries: and even aspired to the character of authoress, having actually perpetrated a sonnet to the moon, which sonnet, contrary to the well-known recipe of Boileau and the ordinary practice of all nations, contained eighteen lines, four quatrains and a couplet; a prodigality of words which the fair poetess endeavoured to counterbalance by a corresponding sparingness of idea. There was no harm in Julia, poor thing, with all her affectation. She was really warm-hearted and well-tempered, and might have improved under her sister's kind and judicious management, but for a small accident which interrupted the family harmony, and eventually occasioned their removal from Hannonby.

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The admiral, always addicted to favouritism, had had under his protection, from boyhood to manhood, one youth of remarkable promise. He had been his first lieutenant on board the Mermaiden, and was now, at three-and-twenty, a master and commander; which promotion, although it ejected him from that paragon of frigates, the young captain did not seem to think so great an evil as the admiral had found his advancement. He was invited to the White House forthwith; and the gallant veteran, who seldom took the trouble to conceal any of his purposes, soon announced that Captain Claremont was his intended son-in-law, and that Miss Julia was the destined bride.

The gentleman arrived, and did as much honour to the admiral's taste as his other favourite, Bill Jones. Captain Claremont was really a very fine young man, with the best part of beauty, figure and countenance, and a delightful mixture of frankness and feeling, of spirit and gaiety, in his open and gentlemanly manners; he was, at a word, just the image that one conjures up when thinking of a naval officer. His presence added greatly to the enjoyment of the family; the admiral "fought his battles over again," and so did his lady, who talked and laughed all day long: Anne watched the proceedings with evident amusement, and looked even archer than usual; whilst Julia, the heroine of the scene, behaved as is customary in such cases, walked about, exquisitely dressed, with a book in her hand, or reclined in a picturesque attitude expecting to be made love to; and Captain Claremont, who had never seen either sister before, pleased with Julia's beauty and a little alarmed at Anne's wit, appeared in a fair way of losing his heart in the proper quarter. In short, the flirtation seemed going on very prosperously; and the admiral, in high glee, vented divers sea jokes on the supposed lovers, and chuckled over the matter to Bill Jones, who winked and grinned and nodded responsively.

After a few weeks that sagacious adherent began to demur

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—"Things seemed," as he observed, "rather at a stand-still—the courtship was a deal slacker, and his honour, the captain, had talked of heaving anchor, and sailing off for Lincolnshire." To this the admiral answered nothing but "tush!" and "pshaw!" and as the captain actually relinquished, with very little pressing, his design of leaving Hannonby, Bill Jones's suspicions did seem a little super-subtle. Bill, however, at the end of ten days, retained his opinion. "For certain," he said, "Miss Julia had all the signs of liking upon her, and moped and hung her head and talked to herself like the negro who drowned himself for love on board the Mermaiden; and the captain, he could not say but he might be in love—he was very much fallen away since he had been in that latitude—had lost his spunk, and was become extraordinarily forgetsome,—he might be in love, likely enough, but not with Miss Julia—he was sure to sheer away from her; never spoke to her at breakfast or dinner, and would tack a hundred ways not to meet her, whilst he was always following in the wake of Miss Anne; and she (Miss Julia) had taken to writing long letters again, and to walking the terrace between the watches, and did not seem to care for the captain. He could not make the matter out. Miss Anne, indeed."—Here the admiral, to whom the possibility of a failure in his favourite scheme had never occurred, interrupted his confidant by a thousand exclamations of "ass! blockhead! lubber!" to which tender appellations that faithful satellite made no other reply than a shake of the head as comprehensive as Lord Burleigh's.

The next morning vindicated Bill's sagacity. Anne, who, for obvious reasons, had taken the task upon herself, communicated to her father that Captain Claremont had proposed to her and that she had accepted his offer. The admiral was furious, but Anne, though very mild, was very firm; she would not give up her lover, nor would her lover relinquish her; and Julia, when appealed to, asserted her female privi-

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lege of white-lying, and declared, that if there was not another man in the world, she would never have married Captain Claremont. The admiral, thwarted by every body, and compelled to submit for the first time in his life, (except in the affair of his promotion and that of the ducked sailor,) stormed, and swore, and scolded all round, and refused to be pacified; Mrs. Floyd, to whom his fiat had seemed like fate, was frightened at the general temerity, and vented her unusual discomfort in scolding too; Anne took refuge in the house of a friend; and poor Julia, rejected by one party and lectured by the other, comforted herself by running away, one fine night, with a young officer of dragoons, with whom she had had an off-and-on correspondence for a twelvemonth. This elopement was the cope-stone of the admiral's misfortunes; he took a hatred to Hannonby, and left it forthwith; and it seemed as if he had left his anger behind him, for the next tidings we heard of the Floyds, Julia and her spouse were forgiven in spite of his soldiership, and the match had turned out far better than might have been expected; and Anne and her captain were in high favour, and the admiral gaily anticipating a flag-ship and a war, and the delight of bringing up his grandsons to be the future ornaments of the British navy.

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HAY-CARRYING.

At one end of the cluster of cottages, and cottage-like houses, which formed the little street of Hilton Cross—a pretty but secluded village, a few miles to the south,—stood the shop of Judith Kent, widow, "Licensed"—as the legend imported, "to vend tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff." Tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff formed, however, but a small part of the multifarious merchandise of Mrs. Kent; whose shop, the only repository of the hamlet, might have seemed an epitome of the wants and luxuries of humble life. In her window, candles, bacon, sugar, mustard, and soap, flourished amidst calicoes, oranges, dolls, ribands, and gingerbread. Crockeryware was piled on one side of her door-way, Dutch cheese and Irish butter encumbered the other; brooms and brushes rested against the wall; and ropes of onions and bunches of red herrings hung from the ceiling. She sold bread, butcher's meat, and garden-stuff, on commission; and engrossed, at a word, the whole trade of Hilton Cross.

Notwithstanding this monopoly, the world went ill with

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poor Judith. She was a mild, pleasant-looking, middle-aged woman, with a heart too soft for her calling. She could not say, no! to the poor creatures who came to her on a Saturday night, to seek bread for their children, however deep they might already be in her debt, or however certain it was that their husbands were, at that moment, spending, at the Chequers or the Four Horse-shoes, the money that should have supported their wives and families; for in this village, as in others, there were two flourishing ale-houses, although but one ill-accustomed shop—"but one halfpenny-worth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack!"

She could not say, no! as a prudent woman might have said; and, accordingly, half the poor people in the parish might be found on her books, whilst she herself was gradually getting in arrears with her baker, her grocer, and her landlord. Her family consisted of two children: Mary, a pretty, fair-haired, smiling lass, of twelve or thirteen, and Robert, a fine youth, nearly ten years older, who worked in the gardens of a neighbouring gentleman. Robert, conscious that his mother's was no gainful trade, often pressed her to give up business, sell off her stock, relinquish her house, and depend on his labour for her support; but of this she would not hear.

Many motives mingled in her determination: a generous reluctance to burthen her dutiful son with her maintenance,—a natural fear of losing *caste* among her neighbours,—a strong love of the house which, for five-and-twenty years, had been her home,—a vague hope that times would mend, and all come right again, (wiser persons than Mrs. Kent have lulled reason to sleep with such an opiate!)—and, above all, a want of courage to look her difficulties fairly in the face. Besides, she liked her occupation,—its petty consequence, its bustle, and its gossipry; and she had a sense of gain in the small peddling bargains,—the pennyworths of needles, and balls of cotton, and rows of pins, and yards of tape, which she was accustomed to vend for ready money, that overbalanced, for

the moment, her losses and her debts; so that, in spite of her son's presages and warnings, the shop continued in full activity.

In addition to his forebodings respecting his mother, Robert had another misfortune;—the poor youth was in love.

About a quarter of a mile down the shady lane, which ran by one side of Mrs. Kent's dwelling, was the pretty farmhouse, orchard, and homestead of Farmer Bell, whose eldest daughter, Susan—the beauty of the parish—was the object of a passion, almost amounting to idolatry. And, in good sooth, Susan Bell was well fitted to inspire such a passion. Besides a light graceful figure, moulded with the exactest symmetry, she had a smiling, innocent countenance, a complexion coloured like the brilliant blossoms of the balsam, and hair of a shining golden brown, like the fruit of the horse-chesnut. Her speech was at once modest and playful, her temper sweet, and her heart tender. She loved Robert dearly, although he often gave her cause to wish that she loved him not; for Robert was subject to the intermitting fever, called jealousy, causelessly—as he himself would declare, when a remission of the disease gave room for his natural sense to act—causelessly and penitently, but still pertinaciously jealous.

I have said that he was a fine young man, tall, dark, and slender; I should add, that he was a good son, a kind brother, a pattern of sobriety and industry, and possessed of talent and acquirement far beyond his station. But there was about him an ardour, a vigour, a fiery restlessness, commonly held proper to the natives of the south of Europe, but which may be found sometimes amongst our own peasantry; all his pursuits, whether of sport or labour, took the form of passion. At ten years old, he had far outstripped his fellow-pupils at the Foundation School, to which, through the kindness of the 'squire of the parish, his mother had been enabled to send him;—at eighteen, he was the best cricketer, the best flute-player, the best bell-ringer, and the best gardener in the county; and some odd volumes

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of Shakspeare having come into his possession, there was some danger at twenty of his turning out a dramatic poet, had not the kind discouragement of his master, to whom some of his early scenes were shown by his patron and admirer, the head gardener, acted as a salutary check. Indeed, so strong at one time was the poetical *furor*, that such a catastrophe as an entire play might, probably, have ensued, notwithstanding Mr. Lescombe's judicious warnings, had not love, the master-passion, fallen, about this time, in poor Robert's way, and engrossed all the ardour of his ardent temperament.

The beauty and playfulness of his mistress, whilst they enchanted his fancy, kept the jealous irritability of his nature in perpetual alarm. He suspected a lover in every man who approached her; and the firm refusal of her father to sanction their union, till her impatient wooer was a little more forward in the world, completed his disquiet. Affairs were in this posture, when a new personage arrived at Hilton Cross.

In addition to her other ways and means, Mrs. Kent tried to lessen her rent by letting lodgings, and the neat, quiet, elderly gentlewoman, the widow of a long-deceased rector, who had occupied her rooms ever since Robert was born, being at last gathered to her fathers, an advertisement of "pleasant apartments to let, in the airy village of Hilton Cross," appeared in the county paper. This announcement was as true as if it had not formed an advertisement in a country newspaper. Very airy *was* the pretty village of Hilton Cross—with its breezy uplands, and its open common, dotted, as it were, with cottages and clumps of trees; and very pleasant *were* Mrs. Kent's apartments, for those who had sufficient taste to appreciate their rustic simplicity, and sufficient humility to overlook their smallness. The little chamber glittering with whiteness; its snowy dimity bed, and "fresh sheets smelling of lavender," the sitting room, a thought larger, carpeted with India matting, its shining cane-chairs, and its bright casement wreathed, on one side, by a luxuriant jessa-

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mine, on the other by the tall cluster musk-rose, sending its bunches of odorous blossoms into the very window; the little flower-court underneath, full of holly-oaks, cloves, and dahlias, and the large sloping meadow beyond, leading up to Farmer Bell's tall irregular house, half-covered with a flaunting vine; his barns, and ricks, and orchard;—all this formed an apartment too tempting to remain long untenanted, in the bright month of August: accordingly, it was almost immediately engaged by a gentleman in black, who walked over one fair morning, paid ten pounds as a deposit, sent for his trunk from the next town, and took possession on the instant.

Her new inmate, who, without positively declining to give his name, had, yet, contrived to evade all the questions Mrs. Kent could devise, proved a perpetual source of astonishment, both to herself and her neighbours.

He was a well-made little man, near upon forty; with considerable terseness of feature, a forehead of great power, whose effect was increased by a slight baldness on the top of the head, and an eye like a falcon. Such an eye! It seemed to go through you—to strike all that it looked upon, like a *coup-de-soleil.* Luckily, the stranger was so merciful as, generally, to wear spectacles; under cover of which those terrible eyes might see, and be seen, without danger.

His habits were as peculiar as his appearance. He was moderate, and rather fanciful, in his diet; drank nothing but water, or strong coffee, made, as Mrs. Kent observed, very wastefully; and had, as she also remarked, a great number of heathenish-looking books scattered about the apartment—Lord Berners's Froissart, for instance, Sir Thomas Brown's Urn Burial, the Baskerville Ariosto,—Gœthe's Faust,—a Spanish Don Quixote,—and an interleaved Philoctetes, full of outline drawings. The greater part of his time was spent out of doors.—He would, even, ramble away, for three or four days together, with no other companion than a boy, hired in the village, to carry what Mrs. Kent denominated his odds and

ends; which odds and ends consisted, for the most part, of an angling rod and a sketching apparatus—our incognito being, as my readers have, by this time, probably discovered, no other than an artist, on his summer progress.

Robert speedily understood the stranger, and was delighted with the opportunity of approaching so gifted a person; although he contemplated, with a degree of generous envy, which a king's regalia would have failed to excite in his bosom, those *chef d'œuvres* of all nations, which were to him as "sealed books," and the pencils, whose power seemed to him little less than creative. He redoubled his industry in the garden, that he might, conscientiously, devote hours and half-hours to pointing out the deep pools and shallow eddies of their romantic stream, where he knew, from experience, (for Robert, amongst his other accomplishments, was no mean "brother of the angle,") that fish were likely to be found; and, better still, he loved to lead to the haunts of his childhood, the wild bosky dells, and the sunny ends of lanes, where a sudden turn in the track, an overhanging tree, an old gate, a cottage chimney, and a group of cattle or children, had, sometimes, formed a picture, on which his mind had fed for hours.

It was Robert's chief pleasure to entice his lodger to scenes such as these, and to see his own visions growing into reality, under the glowing pencil of the artist; and he, in his turn, would admire, and marvel at, the natural feeling of the beautiful, which could lead an uninstructed country-youth instinctively to the very elements of the picturesque. A general agreement of taste had brought about a degree of association unusual between persons so different in rank: a particular instance of this accordance dissolved the intimacy.

Robert had been, for above a fortnight, more than commonly busy in Mr. Lescombe's gardens and hot-houses, so busy that he even slept at the hall; the stranger, on the other hand, had been, during the same period, shut up, painting, in

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the little parlour. At last they met; and the artist invited his young friend to look at the picture, which had engaged him during his absence. On walking into the room he saw on the easel a picture in oils, almost finished. The style was of that delightful kind, which combines figures with landscape, the subject was hay-carrying; and the scene, that very sloping meadow,—crowned by Farmer Bell's tall irregular house, its vine-wreathed porch, and chimneys, the great walnut-tree before the door, the orchard and the homestead—which formed the actual prospect from the windows before them. In the foreground was a waggon piled with hay, surrounded by the Farmer and his fine family,—some pitching, some loading, some raking after, all intent on their pleasant business. The only disengaged persons in the field were young Mary Kent and Harry Bell, an urchin of four years old, who rode on her knee on the top of the waggon, crowned and wreathed with garlands of vine-leaves, and bind-weed, and poppies, and corn-flowers. In the front, looking up at Mary Kent and her little brother, and playfully tossing to them the lock of hay which she had gathered on her rake, stood Susan Bell, her head thrown back, her bonnet half off, her light and lovely figure shown, in all its grace, by the pretty attitude and the short cool dress; while her sweet face, glowing with youth and beauty, had a smile playing over it, like a sunbeam. The boy was nodding and laughing to her, and seemed longing—as well he might—to escape from his flowery bondage, and jump into her arms. Never had poet framed a lovelier image of rural beauty! Never had painter more felicitously realized his conception!

"Well, Robert!" exclaimed our artist, a little impatient of the continued silence, and missing the expected praise, "Well!" but still Robert spoke not. "Don't you think it a good subject?" continued the man of the easel; "I was sitting at the window, reading Froissart, whilst they were carrying the after-crop, and by good luck happened to look up, just as

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they had arranged themselves into this very group, and as the evening sun came slanting, exactly as it does now, across the meadow ; so I dashed in the sketch instantly, got Mary to sit to me,—and a very pretty nymph-like figure she makes—dressed the boy with flowers, just as he was decked out for the harvest home—the rogue is, really, a fit model for a Cupid ; they are a glorious family !—and persuaded Susan—" at that name, Robert, unable to control himself longer, rushed out of the room, leaving the astonished painter in the full belief that his senses had forsaken him.

The unhappy lover, agonized by jealousy, pursued his way to the farm. He had, hitherto, contrived, although without confessing his motive, even to himself, to keep his friend and his mistress asunder. He had no fears of her virtue, or of his honour ; but, to Robert's romantic simplicity, it seemed that no one could gaze on Susan without feeling ardent love, and that such a man as the artist could never love in vain. Besides, in the conversations which they had held together, he had dwelt on beauty and simplicity as the most attractive points of female character :—Robert had felt, as he spoke, that Susan was the very being whom he described, and had congratulated himself that they were still unacquainted. But now, they had met ; he had seen, he had studied, had transferred to canvass that matchless beauty ; had conquered the timidity which, to Robert, had always seemed unconquerable ; had won her to admit his gaze, had tamed that shyest, coyest dove ; had become familiar with that sweetest face, and that dearest form ;—oh ! the very thought was agony !

In this mood, he arrived at the farm ; and there, working at her needle under the vine-wreathed porch, with the evening sun shining full upon her, and her little brother playing at her feet, sat his own Susan. She heard his rapid step, and advanced to meet him with a smile and a blush of delight, just the smile and blush of the picture. At such a moment, they increased his misery ; he repulsed her offered hand, and poured

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forth a torrent of questions on the subject which possessed his mind. Her innocent answers were fuel to his frenzy :—" The picture ! had he seen the picture ? and was it not pretty ? much too pretty, she thought, but every body called it like ! and Mary and Harry—was not he pleased with them ? What a wonderful thing it was to make a bit of canvass so like living creatures ! and what a wonderful man the strange gentleman was ! she had been afraid of him, at first—sadly afraid of those two bright eyes—and so had Harry :—poor Harry had cried ! but he was so merry and so kind, that neither of them minded sitting to him, now ! And she was so glad that Robert had seen the picture ! she had so wanted him to see it ! it was too pretty, to be sure,—but, then, Robert would not mind that. She had told the gentleman"—" Go to the gentleman now," interrupted Robert, " and tell him that I relinquish you ! It will be welcome news ! Go to him, Susan ! your heart is with him. Go to him, I say !" and, throwing from him, with a bitter laugh, the frightened and weeping girl, who had laid her trembling hand on his arm, to detain him, he darted from the door, and returned to his old quarters at the hall.

Another fortnight passed, and Robert still kept aloof from his family and his home. His mother and sister, indeed, occasionally saw him ; and sad accounts had poor little Mary to give to her friend Susan, of Robert's ill looks and worse spirits. And Susan listened, and said she did not care ; and burst into a passion of tears, and said she was very happy ; and vowed never to speak to him again, and desired Mary never to mention her to him, or him to her, and then asked her a hundred questions respecting his looks, and his words, and his illness, and charged her with a thousand tender messages, which, in the next breath, she withdrew. And Mary, too young to understand the inconsistencies of love, pitied and comforted, and thought it " passing strange."

In the mean time misfortunes of a different kind were gathering round Mrs. Kent. The mealman and baker, whose

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bread she vended, her kindest friend and largest creditor, died, leaving his affairs in the hands of an attorney of the next town, the pest and terror of the neighbourhood; and, on the same day, she received two letters from this formidable lawyer, —one on account of his dead client, the baker, the other on behalf of his living client, the grocer, who ranked next amongst her creditors, both threatening that if their respective claims were not liquidated, on or before a certain day, proceedings would be commenced against her forthwith.

It is in such a situation that woman most feels her helplessness,—especially that forlorn creature whom the common people, adopting the pathetic language of Scripture, designate by the expressive phrase, "a lone woman!" Poor Judith sat down to cry, in powerless sorrow and vain self-pity. She opened, indeed, her hopeless day-book,—but she knew too well that her debtors could not pay. She had no one to consult,—for her lodger, in whose general cleverness she had great confidence, had been absent, on one of his excursions, almost as long as her son,—and time pressed upon her,—for the letters, sent with the usual indirectness of country conveyance, originally given to the carrier, confided by the carrier to the butterman, carried on by the butterman to the next village, left for three days at a public-house, and, finally, delivered at Hilton Cross, by a return post-boy—had been nearly a week on the road. Saturday was the day fixed for payment, and this was Friday night! and Michaelmas and rent-day were approaching! and unable even to look at this accumulation of misery, poor Judith laid her head on her fruitless accompt-book, and sobbed aloud!

It was with a strangely mingled feeling of comfort in such a son, and sorrow so to grieve him, that she heard Robert's voice at her side, asking, tenderly, what ailed her? She put the letters into his hands; and he, long prepared for the blow, soöthed and cheered her. "All must be given up," he said, "and he would go with her the next day, to make over the

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whole property. Let us pay, as far as our means go, mother," pursued he, "and do not fear but, some day or other, we shall be able to discharge all our debts. God will speed an honest purpose. In the mean time, Mr. Lescombe will give us a cottage—I know he will—and I shall work for you and Mary. It will be something to live for—something worth living for. Be comforted, dear mother!" He stooped, as he said this, and kissed her; and when he arose, he saw Susan standing opposite to him, and behind her the stranger. They had entered separately, during the conversation between the mother and son, and Susan was still unconscious of the artist's presence.

She stood, in great agitation, pressing Mary's hand, (from whom she had heard the story,) and immediately began questioning Mrs. Kent as to the extent of the calamity. "She had twenty pounds of her own, that her grandmother had left her;—but a hundred! did they want a whole hundred?—and would they send Mrs. Kent to prison? and sell her goods? and turn Mary out of doors? and Robert—Oh! how ill Robert looked!—It would kill Robert!—Oh!" continued Susan, wringing her hands, "I would sell myself for a bondwoman, I would be like a negro-slave, for one hundred pounds!" "Would you?" said the stranger, advancing suddenly from the door, and producing two bank bills; "would you? well! we will strike a bargain. I will give you two hundred pounds for this little hand, only this little hand!"—"What do you mean, Sir?" exclaimed Mrs. Kent, "what can you mean!" "Nothing but what is fair and honourable," returned her lodger; "let Susan promise to meet me at church, to-morrow, and here are two hundred pounds to dispose of, at her pleasure, to-night." "Susan! my dear Susan!"—"Let her alone, mother!" interrupted Robert; "she must choose for herself!" and, for a few moments, there was a dead silence. Robert stood, leaning against the wall, pale as marble, his eyes cast down, and his lips compressed, in a state of forced composure.

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Mrs. Kent, her head turning, now towards the bank-notes, and now towards her son, was in a state of restless and uncontrollable instability; Mary clung, crying, about her mother; and Susan, her colour varying, and her lips quivering, sat, unconsciously, twisting and untwisting the bank-notes in her hand.

"Well, Susan!" said the artist, who had remained in tranquil expectation, surveying the group with his falcon eye, "Well, Susan! have you determined?"—The colour rose to her temples, and she answered firmly, "Yes, Sir! be pleased to take back the notes. I love nobody but Robert, and Robert loves me dearly, dearly! I know he does! Oh Mrs. Kent! you would not have me vex Robert, your own dear son, and he so ill,—would you? Let them take these things! they never can be so cruel as to put you in prison—you, who were always so kind to every body; and he will work for you! and I will work for you! Never mind being poor! better any thing than be false-hearted to my Robert?" "God for ever bless you, my Susan!" "God bless you, my dear child!" burst, at once, from Robert and his mother, as they, alternately, folded her in their arms.

"Pray take the notes, Sir," repeated Susan, after a short interval. "No! that I will not do," replied the stranger, smiling. "The notes shall be yours,—are yours,—and what is more, on my own conditions! Meet me at church to-morrow morning, and I shall have the pleasure of bestowing this pretty hand, as I always intended, on my good friend, Robert, here. I have a wife of my own at home, my dear, whom I would not exchange, even for you; and I am quite rich enough to afford myself the luxury of making you happy. Besides, you have a claim to the money. These very bank-notes were gained by that sweet face! Your friend, Mr. Lescombe, Robert, has purchased the hay-carrying! We have had a good deal of talk about you, and I am quite certain that he will provide for you all. No thanks!" continued he, interrupting

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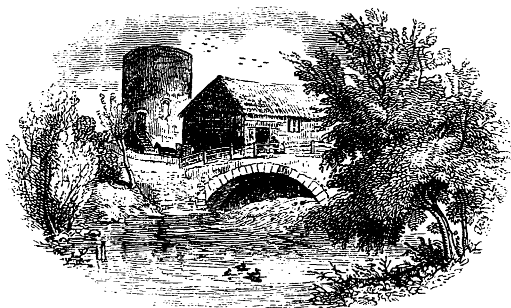
something that Robert was going to say,—"No thanks! no apologies! I won't hear a word. Meet me at church to-morrow! but remember, young man, no more jealousy!" and, followed by a glance from Susan, of which Robert might have been jealous, the artist left the shop.

THE QUEEN OF THE MEADOW



In a winding unfrequented road, on the south side of our Village, close to a low, two-arched bridge, thrown across a stream of more beauty than consequence, stood the small irregular dwelling and the picturesque buildings of Hatherford Mill. It was a pretty scene on a summer afternoon, was that old mill, with its strong lights and shadows, its low-browed cottage covered with the clustering Pyracantha, and the clear brook, which, after dashing, and foaming, and brawling, and playing off all the airs of a mountain river, while pent up in the mill-stream, was no sooner let loose, than it subsided into its natural peaceful character, and crept quietly along the

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valley, meandering through the green woody meadows, as tranquil a trout stream as ever Izaak Walton angled in.

Many a traveller has stayed his step to admire the old buildings of Hatherford Mill, backed by its dark orchard, especially when its accompanying figures, the jolly miller sitting before the door, pipe in mouth, and jug in hand, like one of Teniers' boors, the mealy miller's man with his white sack over his shoulders, carefully descending the out-of-door steps, and the miller's daughter, flitting about amongst her poultry, gave life and motion to the picture.

The scenery at the other side of the road was equally attractive, in a different style. Its principal feature was the great farm of the parish, an old manorial house, solid and venerable, with a magnificent clump of witch elms in front of the porch, a suburb of out-buildings behind, and an old-fashioned garden with its rows of espaliers, its wide flower-borders, and its close filbert-walk, stretching like a cape into the waters, the strawberry beds sloping into the very stream; so that the cows, which in sultry weather came down by twos and by threes, from the opposite meadows, to cool themselves in the water, could almost crop the leaves as they stood.

In my mind, that was the pleasanter scene of the two; but such could hardly have been the general opinion, since nine out of ten passers by never vouchsafed a glance at the great farm, but kept their eyes steadily fixed on the mill; perhaps to look at the old buildings, perhaps at the miller's young daughter.

Katy Dawson was accounted by common consent the prettiest girl in the parish. Female critics in beauty would be sure to limit the commendation by asserting that her features were irregular, that she had not a good feature in her face, and so forth; but these remarks were always made in her absence, and no sooner did she appear than even her critics felt the power of her exceeding loveliness. It was the Hebe look

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of youth and health, the sweet and joyous expression, and above all, the unrivalled brilliancy of colouring, that made Katy's face, with all its faults, so pleasant to look upon. A complexion of the purest white, a coral lip, and a cheek like the pear, her namesake, "on the side that's next the sun," were relieved by rich curls of brown hair, of the deep yet delicate hue that one sometimes finds in the ripest and latest hazel-nut of the season. Her figure was well suited to her blossomy countenance, round, short, and child-like; add to this, "a pretty foot, a merry glance, a passing pleasing tongue," and no wonder that Katy was the belle of the village.

But gay and smiling though she were, the fair maid of the mill was little accessible to wooers. Her mother had long been dead, and her father, who held her as the very apple of his eye, kept her carefully away from the rustic junketings, at which rural flirtations are usually begun. Accordingly our village beauty had reached the age of eighteen, without a lover. She had indeed had two offers; one from a dashing horse-dealer, who having seen her for five minutes one day, when her father called her to admire a nag that he was cheapening, proposed for her that very night as they were chaffering about the price, and took the refusal in such dudgeon, that he would have left the house utterly inconsolable, had he not contrived to comfort himself by cheating the offending papa, twice as much as he intended, in his horse bargain. The other proffer was from a staid, thick, sober, silent, middle-aged personage, who united the offices of schoolmaster and land-measurer, an old crony of the good miller's, in whose little parlour he had smoked his pipe regularly every Saturday evening for the last thirty years, and who called him still from habit, "Young Sam Robinson." He, one evening as they sat together smoking, outside the door, broke his accustomed silence, with a formal demand of his comrade's permission to present himself as a suitor to Miss Katy; which permission being, as soon as her father could speak for aston-

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ishment, civilly refused, Master Samuel Robinson addressed himself to his pipe again, with his wonted phlegm, played a manful part in emptying the ale jug and discussing the Welsh rabbit, reappeared as usual on the following Saturday, and, to judge from his whole demeanour, seemed to have entirely forgotten his unlucky proposal.

Soon after the rejection of this most philosophical of all discarded swains, an important change took place in the neighbourhood, in the shape of a new occupant of the great farm. The quiet respectable old couple, who had resided there for half a century, had erected the mossy sun-dial, and planted the great mulberry-tree, having determined to retire from business, were succeeded by a new tenant from a distant county, the youngest son of a gentleman brought up to agricultural pursuits, whose spirit and activity, his boldness in stocking and cropping, and his scientific management of manures and machinery, formed the strongest possible contrast with the old-world practices of his predecessors. All the village was full of admiration of the intelligent young farmer, Edward Grey; who being unmarried, and of a kindly and sociable disposition, soon became familiar with high and low, and was no where a greater favourite than with his opposite neighbour, our good miller.

Katy's first feeling towards her new acquaintance was an awe altogether different from her usual shamefacedness; a genuine fear of the quickness and talent which broke out not merely in his conversation, but in every line of his acute and lively countenance. There was, occasionally, a sudden laughing light in his hazel eye, and a very arch and momentary smile, now seen, and now gone, to which, becoming as most people thought them, she had a particular aversion. In short, she paid the young farmer, for so he persisted in being called, the compliment of running away, as soon as he came in sight, for three calendar months. At the end of that time, appearances mended. First she began to loiter at the door; then

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she staid in the room; then she listened; then she smiled; then she laughed outright; then she ventured to look up; then she began to talk in her turn; and before another month had passed, would prattle to Edward Grey as fearlessly and freely as to her own father.

On his side, it was clear that the young farmer, with all his elegance and refinement, his education and intelligence, liked nothing better than this simple village lass. He passed over the little humours, proper to her as a beauty and a spoiled child, with the kindness of an indulgent brother; was amused with her artlessness, and delighted with her gaiety. Gradually he began to find his own fireside lonely, and the parties of the neighbourhood boisterous; the little parlour of the miller formed just the happy medium, quietness without solitude, and society without dissipation—and thither he resorted accordingly; his spaniel Ranger taking possession of the middle of the hearth-rug, just as comfortably as if in his master's own demesnes, and Katy's large tabby cat, a dog-hater by profession, not merely submitting to the usurpation, but even ceasing to erect her bristles on his approach.

So the world waned for three months more. One or two little miffs had, indeed, occurred between the parties; once, for instance, at a fair held in the next town on the first of May, Katy having been frightened at the lions and tigers painted outside a show, had nevertheless been half-led, half-forced into the booth to look at the real living monsters, by her ungallant beau. This was a sad offence. But unluckily our village damsel had been so much entertained by some monkeys and parrots on her first entrance, that she quite forgot to be frightened, and afterwards, when confronted with the royal brutes, had taken so great a fancy to a beautiful panther, as to wish to have him for a pet; so that this quarrel passed away almost as soon as it began. The second was about the colour of a riband, an election riband; Katy having been much caught by the graceful person and gracious manners

of a county candidate, who called to request her father's vote, had taken upon herself to canvass their opposite neighbour, and was exceedingly astonished to find her request refused, on no better plea, than a difference from her favourite in political opinion, and a previous promise to his opponent. The little beauty, astonished at her want of influence, and rendered zealous by opposition, began to look grave, and parties would certainly have run high at Hatherford, had not her candidate put a stop to the dispute, by declining to come to the poll. So that that quarrel was, per force, pretermitted. At last a real and serious anxiety overclouded Katy's innocent happiness; and as it often happens, in this world of contradictions, the grievance took the form of a gratified wish.

Of all her relations, her cousin Sophy Maynard had long been her favourite. She was an intelligent, unaffected young woman, a few years older than herself; the daughter of a London tradesman, excellently brought up, with a great deal of information and taste, and a total absence of airs and finery. In person, she might almost be called plain, but there was such a natural gentility about her; her manners were so pleasing and her conversation so attractive, that few people after passing an evening in her society remembered her want of beauty. She was exceedingly fond of the country, and of her pretty cousin, who, on her part, looked up to her with much of the respectful fondness of a younger sister, and had thought to herself a hundred times, when most pleased with their new neighbour, "how I wish my cousin Sophy could see Edward Grey;" and now that her cousin Sophy had seen Edward Grey, poor Katy would have given all that she possessed in the world if they had never met. They were heartily delighted with each other, and proclaimed openly their mutual good opinion. Sophy praised Mr. Grey's vivacity; Edward professed himself enchanted with Miss Maynard's voice. Each was astonished to find in the other a cultivation unusual in that walk of life. They talked, and laughed, and sang to-

gether, and seemed so happy that Katy, without knowing why, became quite miserable, flew from Edward, avoided Sophy, shrank away from her kind father, and found no rest or comfort, except when she could creep alone to some solitary place, and give vent to her vexation in tears. Poor Katy! she could not tell what ailed her, but she was quite sure that she was wretched; and then she cried again.

In the mean while, the intimacy between the new friends became closer and closer. There was an air of intelligence between them, that might have puzzled wiser heads than that of our simple miller-maiden. A secret—could it be a love-secret? And the influence of the gentleman was so open and avowed, that Sophy, when on the point of departure, consented to prolong her visit to Hatherford, at his request, although she had previously resisted Katy's solicitations, and the hospitable urgency of her father.

Affairs were in this posture, when one fine evening, towards the end of June, the cousins sallied forth for a walk, and were suddenly joined by Edward Grey, when at such a distance from the house as to prevent the possibility of Katy's stealing back thither, as had been her usual habit on such occasions. The path they chose led through long narrow meadows, sloping down, on either side, to the winding stream, enclosed by high hedges, and, seemingly, shut out from the world.

A pleasant walk it was, through those newly-mown meadows, just cleared of the hay, with the bright rivulet meandering through banks so variously beautiful; now fringed by rushes and sedges; now bordered by little thickets of hawthorn, and woodbine, and the brier-rose; now overhung by a pollard ash, or a silver-barked beech, or a lime tree in full blossom. Now a smooth turfy slope, green to the eye, and soft to the foot; and now again a rich embroidery of the golden flag, the purple willow-herb, the blue forget-me-not, and "a thousand fresh-water flowers of several colours," making the bank as gay as a garden.

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It was impossible not to pause in this lovely spot; and Sophy, who had been collecting a bright bunch of pink blossoms, the ragged-robin, the wild rose, the crane's-bill, and the fox-glove, or to use the prettier Irish name of that superb plant, the fairy-cap, appealed to Katy to "read a lecture of her country art," and show "what every flower, as country people hold, did signify." A talent for which the young maid of the mill was as celebrated as Bellario. But poor Katy, who, declining Edward's offered arm, had loitered a little behind, gathering a long wreath of the woodbine, and the briony, and the wild vetch, was, or pretended to be, deeply engaged in twisting the garland round her straw bonnet, and answered not a word. She tied on her bonnet, however, and stood by listening, whilst the other two continued to talk of the symbolic meaning of flowers, quoting the well-known lines from the Winter's Tale, and the almost equally charming passage from Philaster.

At length Edward, who, during the conversation, had been gathering all that he could collect of the tall almond-scented tufts of the elegant meadow-sweet, whose crested blossoms arrange themselves in a plumage so richly delicate, said, holding up his nosegay, "I do not know what mystical interpretation may be attached to this plant in Katy's 'country art,' but it is my favourite amongst flowers; and if I were inclined to follow the Eastern fashion of courtship, and make love by a nosegay, I should certainly send it to plead my cause. And it shall be so," he added, after a short pause, his bright and sudden smile illumining his whole countenance; "the botanical name signifies, the Queen of the Meadow, and wherever I offer this tribute, wherever I place this tuft, the homage of my heart, the proffer of my hand, shall go also. Oh, that the offering might find favour with my queen!" Katy heard no more. She turned away to a little bay formed by the rivulet, where a bed of pebbles, overhung by a grassy bank, afforded a commodious seat, and there she sat her down, trembling,

cold, and wretched; understanding, for the first time, her own feelings, and wondering if any body in all the world had ever been so unhappy before.

There she sat, with the tears rolling down her cheeks, unconsciously making "rings of rushes that grew thereby," and Edward's dog Ranger, who had been watching a shoal of minnows at play in the shallow water, and every now and then inserting his huge paw into the stream, as if trying to catch one, came to her, and laid his rough head, and his long curling brown ears, into her lap, and looked at her with "eyes whose human meaning did not need the aid of speech"—eyes full of pity and of love; for Ranger, in common with all the four-footed world, loved Katy dearly: and now he looked up in her face, and licked her cold hand. Oh! kinder and faithfuller than your master, thought poor Katy, as, with a fresh gush of tears, she laid her sweet face on the dog's head, and sat in that position, as it seemed to her, for ages, whilst her companions were hooking and landing some white water-lilies.

At last they approached, and she arose hastily, and tremblingly, and walked on, anxious to escape observation. "Your garland is loose, Katy," said Edward, lifting his hand to her bonnet: "Come and see how nicely I have fastened it! No clearer mirror than the dark smooth basin of water, under those hazels! Come!" He put her hand under his arm, and led her thither; and there, when mechanically she cast her eyes on the stream, she saw the rich tuft of meadow-sweet, the identical Queen of the Meadow, waving like a plume, over her own straw bonnet: felt herself caught in Edward's arms; for between surprise and joy, she had well nigh fallen; and when, with instinctive modesty, she escaped from his embrace, and took refuge with her cousin, the first sound that she heard was Sophy's affectionate whisper, "I knew it all the time, Katy; every body knew it but you! and the wedding must be next week, for I have promised Edward to stay and be bride's-maid;" and the very next week they were married.

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DORA CRESWELL.

Few things are more delightful than to saunter along these green lanes of ours, in the busy harvest-time; the deep verdure of the hedge-rows, and the strong shadow of the trees, contrasting so vividly with the fields, partly waving with golden corn, partly studded with regular piles of heavy wheat-sheaves; the whole population abroad; the whole earth teeming with fruitfulness, and the bright autumn sun careering overhead, amidst the deep blue sky, and the fleecy clouds of the most glowing, and least fickle of the seasons. Even a solitary walk loses its loneliness in the general cheerfulness of nature. The air is gay with bees and butterflies; the robin twitters from amongst the ripening hazel-nuts; and you cannot proceed a quarter of a mile, without encountering some merry group of leasers, or some long line of majestic wains, groaning under their rich burthen, brushing the close hedges on either side, and knocking their tall tops against the overhanging trees; the very image of ponderous plenty.

Pleasant, however, as such a procession is to look at, it is somewhat dangerous to meet, especially in a narrow lane; and I thought myself very fortunate one day last August, in being so near a five-barred gate, as to be enabled to escape from a cortége of labourers, and harvest-waggons, sufficiently bulky and noisy to convoy half the wheat in the parish. On they went, men, women, and children, shouting, laughing, and singing in joyous expectation of the coming harvest-home; the very waggons nodding from side to side, as if tipsy, and threatening every moment to break down bank, and tree, and hedge, and crush every obstacle that opposed them. It would have been as safe to encounter the car of Jugger

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naut; I blest my stars for my escape; and after leaning on the friendly gate until the last gleaner had passed, a ragged rogue of seven years old, who, with hair as white as flax, a skin as brown as a berry, and features as grotesque as an Indian idol, was brandishing his tuft of wheat-ears, and shrieking forth, in a shrill childish voice, and with a most ludicrous gravity, the popular song of "Buy a broom"—after watching this young gentleman, (the urchin is of my acquaintance,) as long as a curve in the lane would permit, I turned to examine in what spot chance had placed me, and found before my eyes another picture of rural life, but one as different from that which I had just witnessed, as the Arcadian peasants of Poussin, from the Boors of Teniers, or weeds from flowers, or poetry from prose.

I had taken refuge in a harvest-field belonging to my good neighbour, Farmer Creswell; a beautiful child lay on the ground at some little distance, whilst a young girl, resting from the labour of reaping, was twisting a rustic wreath of enamelled corn-flowers, brilliant poppies, snow-white lily-bines, and light fragile hare-bells, mingled with tufts of the richest wheat-ears, around its hat.

There was something in the tender youthfulness of these two innocent creatures, in the pretty, though somewhat fantastic, occupation of the girl, the fresh wild-flowers, the ripe and swelling corn that harmonized with the season and the hour, and conjured up memories of "Dis and Proserpine," and of all that is gorgeous and graceful, in old mythology; of the lovely Lavinia of our own poet, and of that finest pastoral of the world, the far lovelier Ruth. But these fanciful associations soon vanished before the real sympathy excited by the actors of the scene, both of whom were known to me, and both objects of a sincere and lively interest.

The young girl, Dora Creswell, was the orphan niece of one of the wealthiest yeomen in our part of the world, the

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only child of his only brother; and having lost both her parents whilst still an infant, had been reared by her widowed uncle as fondly and carefully as his own son Walter. He said that he loved her quite as well, perhaps he loved her better; for though it was impossible for a father not to be proud of the bold handsome youth, who at eighteen had a man's strength, and a man's stature; was the best ringer, the best cricketer, and the best shot in the county; yet the fairy Dora, who, nearly ten years younger, was at once his handmaid, his housekeeper, his plaything, and his companion, was evidently the apple of his eye. Our good farmer vaunted her accomplishments, as men of his class are wont to boast of a high-bred horse, or a favourite greyhound.

She could make a shirt and a pudding, darn stockings, rear poultry, keep accounts, and read the newspaper; was as famous for gooseberry wine as Mrs. Primrose, and could compound a syllabub with any dairy-woman in the county. There was not so handy a little creature any where; so thoughtful and trusty about the house, and yet out of doors as gay as a lark, and as wild as the wind; nobody was like his Dora. So said, and so thought, Farmer Creswell: and before Dora was ten years old, he had resolved that in due time she should marry his son, Walter, and had informed both parties of his intention.

Now Farmer Creswell's intentions were well known to be as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. He was a fair specimen of an English yeoman, a tall, square-built, muscular man, stout and active, with a resolute countenance, a keen eye, and an intelligent smile; his temper was boisterous and irascible, generous and kind to those whom he loved, but quick to take offence, and slow to pardon, expecting and exacting implicit obedience from all about him. With all Dora's good gifts, the sweet and yielding nature of the gentle and submissive little girl, was undoubtedly the chief cause of her uncle's partiality. Above all, he was obstinate in the

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highest degree, had never been known to yield a point, or change a resolution; and the fault was the more inveterate, because he called it firmness, and accounted it a virtue. For the rest, he was a person of excellent principle, and perfect integrity, clear-headed, prudent, and sagacious; fond of agricultural experiments, which he pursued cautiously, and successfully; a good farmer, and a good man.

His son Walter, who was in person a handsome likeness of his father, resembled him also in many points of character, was equally obstinate, and far more fiery, hot, and bold. He loved his pretty cousin, much as he would have loved a favourite sister, and might very possibly, if let alone, have become attached to her as his father wished; but to be dictated to, to be chained down to a distant engagement, to hold himself bound to a mere child; the very idea was absurd; and restraining with difficulty an abrupt denial, he walked down into the village, predisposed, out of sheer contradiction, to fall in love with the first young woman who should come in his way; and he did fall in love accordingly.

Mary Hay, the object of his ill-fated passion, was the daughter of the respectable mistress of a small endowed school at the other end of the parish. She was a delicate, interesting creature, with a slight, drooping figure, and a fair downcast face, like a snow-drop, forming such a contrast with her gay and gallant wooer, as Love, in his vagaries, is often pleased to bring together.

The courtship was secret and tedious, and prolonged from months to years; for Mary shrank from the painful contest which she knew that an avowal of their attachment would occasion. At length her mother died, and deprived of home, and maintenance, she reluctantly consented to a private marriage; an immediate discovery ensued, and was followed by all the evils, and more than all, that her worst fears had anticipated. Her husband was turned from the house of his father, and in less than three months, his death, by an inflam-

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matory fever, left her a desolate and pennyless widow—unowned and unassisted by the stern parent, on whose unrelenting temper neither the death of his son, nor the birth of his grandson, seemed to make the slightest impression. But for the general sympathy excited by the deplorable situation and blameless demeanour of the widowed bride, she and her infant might have taken refuge in the workhouse. The whole neighbourhood was zealous to relieve, and to serve them ; but their most liberal benefactress, their most devoted friend, was poor Dora. Considering her uncle's partiality to herself as the primary cause of all this misery, she felt like a guilty creature ; and casting off at once her native timidity, and habitual submission, she had repeatedly braved his anger, by the most earnest supplications for mercy and for pardon ; and when this proved unavailing, she tried to mitigate their distresses by all the assistance that her small means would permit. Every shilling of her pocket-money she expended upon her poor cousins ; worked for them, begged for them, and transferred to them every present that was made to herself, from a silk frock to a penny tartlet. Every thing that was her own she gave, but nothing of her uncle's ; for, though sorely tempted to transfer some of the plenty around her to those whose claims seemed so just, and whose need was so urgent, Dora felt that she was trusted, and that she must prove herself trust-worthy.

Such was the posture of affairs at the time of my encounter with Dora, and little Walter, in the harvest-field ; the rest will be best told in the course of our dialogue.

"And so, madam ! I cannot bear to see my dear cousin Mary so sick, and so melancholy ; and the dear, dear child, that a king might be proud of,—only look at him !" exclaimed Dora, interrupting herself, as the beautiful child, sitting on the ground, in all the placid dignity of infancy, looked up at me and smiled in my face ; "only look at him," continued she, 'and think of that dear boy, and his dear mother living on

charity, and they my uncle's lawful heirs, whilst I, who have no right whatever, no claim at all,—I, that, compared to them, am but a far-off kinswoman, the mere creature of his bounty, should revel in comfort, and in plenty, and they starving! I cannot bear it, and I will not. And then the wrong that he is doing himself, he that is really so good and kind, to be called a hard-hearted tyrant, by the whole country side. And he is unhappy himself too; I know that he is; so tired as he comes home, he will walk about his room half the night; and often at meal-times he will drop his knife and fork, and sigh so heavily. He may turn me out of doors, as he threatened; or, what is worse, call me ungrateful, or undutiful; but he shall see this boy."

"He never has seen him, then? and that is the reason you are tricking him out so prettily."—

"Yes, ma'am. Mind what I told you, Walter! and hold up your hat, and say what I bid you."

"Gan-papa's fowers!" stammered the pretty boy, in his sweet childish voice, the first words that I had ever heard him speak.

"Grand-papa's flowers!" said his zealous preceptress.

"Gan-papa's fowers!" echoed the boy.

"Shall you take the child to the house, Dora?" asked I.

"No, ma'am, for I look for my uncle here every minute, and this is the best place to ask a favour in, for the very sight of the great crop puts him in good humour; not so much on account of the profits, but because the land never bore half so much before, and it's all owing to his management in dressing and drilling. I came reaping here to-day, on purpose to please him; for though he says he does not wish me to work in the fields, I know he likes it; and here he shall see little Walter. Do you think he can resist him, ma'am," continued Dora, leaning over her infant cousin, with the grace and fondness of a young Madonna; "do you think he can resist him, poor child! so helpless, so harmless; his own blood too, and so like his father, no heart could be hard

enough to hold out, and I am sure that he will not. Only," pursued Dora, relapsing into her girlish tone and attitude, as a cold fear crossed her enthusiastic hope,—" only I'm half-afraid that Walter will cry. It's strange, when one wants any thing to behave particularly well, how sure it is to be naughty; my pets especially. I remember when my Lady Countess came on purpose to see our white peacock, that we got in a present from India, the obstinate bird ran away behind a bean-stack, and would not spread his train, to show the dead white spots on his glossy white feathers, all we could do. Her Ladyship was quite angry. And my red and yellow marvel of Peru, which used to blow at four in the afternoon, as regular as the clock struck, was not open the other day at five, when dear Miss Ellen came to paint it, though the sun was shining as bright as it does now. If Walter should scream and cry, for my uncle does sometimes look so stern; and then it's Saturday, and he has such a beard! if the child should be frightened!—Be sure, Walter, you don't cry!" said Dora, in great alarm.

"Gan-papa's fowers," replied the smiling boy, holding up his hat; and his young protectress was comforted.

At that moment the farmer was heard whistling to his dog in a neighbouring field, and fearful that my presence might injure the cause, I departed, my thoughts full of the noble little girl, and her generous purpose.

I had promised to call the next afternoon, to learn her success; and passing the harvest-field in my way, I found a group assembled there, which instantly dissipated my anxiety. On the very spot where we had parted, I saw the good farmer himself, in his Sunday clothes, tossing little Walter in the air; the child laughing and screaming with delight, and his grandfather apparently quite as much delighted as himself. A pale, slender young woman, in deep mourning, stood looking at their gambols with an air of intense thankfulness; and Dora, the cause and sharer of all this happiness, was loitering

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behind, playing with the flowers in Walter's hat, which she was holding in her hand. Catching my eye, the sweet girl came to me instantly.

"I see how it is, my dear Dora! and I give you joy from the bottom of my heart. Little Walter behaved well, then?"

"Oh he behaved like an angel."

"Did he say, Gan-papa's fowers?"

"Nobody spoke a word. The moment the child took off his hat, and looked up, the truth seemed to flash on my uncle, and to melt his heart at once—the boy is so like his father. He knew him instantly, and caught him up in his arms, and hugged him just as he is hugging him now."

"And the beard, Dora?"

"Why, that seemed to take the child's fancy, he put up his little hands and stroked it; and laughed in his grandfather's face, and flung his chubby arms round his neck, and held out his sweet mouth to be kissed; and how my uncle did kiss him! I thought he never would have done; and then he sat down on a wheat-sheaf and cried; and I cried too! Very strange that one should cry for happiness!" added Dora, as some large drops fell on the wreath which she was adjusting round Walter's hat; "Very strange," repeated she, looking up with a bright smile, and brushing away the tears from her rosy cheeks, with a bunch of corn-flowers; "Very strange that I should cry, when I am the happiest creature alive; for Mary and Walter are to live with us; and my dear uncle, instead of being angry with me, says that he loves me better than ever. How very strange it is," said Dora, as the tears poured down, faster and faster, "that I should be so foolish as to cry!"

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THE BIRD-CATCHER.

A London fog is a sad thing, as every inhabitant of Loı don knows full well: dingy, dusky, dirty, damp; an atmosphere black as smoke and wet as steam, that wraps round you like a blanket; a cloud reaching from earth to heaven; a "palpable obscure," which not only turns day into night, but threatens to extinguish the lamps and lanthorns, with which the poor street-wanderers strive to illumine their darkness, dimming and paling the "ineffectual fires," until the volume of gas at a shop-door cuts no better figure than a hedge glow-worm, and a duchess's flambeau would veil its glories to a Will-o'-the-wisp. A London fog is, not to speak profanely, a sort of renewal and reversal of Joshua's miracle; the sun seems to stand still as on that occasion, only that now it stands in the wrong place, and gives light to the Antipodes. The very noises of the street come stifled and smothered through that suffocating medium; din is at a pause; the town is silenced; and the whole population, biped and quadruped, sympathize with the dead and chilling weight of the out-of-door world. Dogs and cats just look up from their slumbers, turn round, and go to sleep again; the little birds open their pretty eyes, stare about them, wonder that the night is so long, and settle themselves afresh on their perches. Silks lose their gloss, cravats their stiffness, hackney-coachmen their way; young ladies fall out of curl, and mammas out of temper; masters scold; servants grumble; and the whole city, from Hyde Park Corner to Wapping, looks sleepy and cross, like a fine gentleman roused before his time, and forced to get up by candle-light. Of all detestable things, a London fog is the most detestable.

Now a country fog is quite another matter. To say nothing of its rarity, and in this dry and healthy midland county few

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of the many variations of our variable English climate are rarer; to say nothing of its unfrequent recurrence, there is about it much of the peculiar and characteristic beauty which almost all natural phenomena exhibit to those who have themselves that faculty, oftener perhaps claimed than possessed, a genuine feeling of nature. This last lovely autumn, when the flowers of all seasons seemed mingling as one sometimes sees them in a painter's garland—the violets and primroses reblossoming, and new crops of sweet-peas and mignonette blending with the chrysanthemum, the Michaelmas daisy, and the dahlia, the latest blossoms of the year—when the very leaves clung to the trees with a freshness so vigorous and so youthful, that they seemed to have determined, in spite of their old bad habit, that for once they would not fall—this last lovely autumn has given us more foggy mornings, or rather more foggy days, than I ever remember to have seen in Berkshire: days beginning in a soft and vapoury mistiness, enveloping the whole country in a veil, snowy, fleecy, and light, as the smoke which one often sees circling in the distance from some cottage chimney, or as the still whiter clouds which float around the moon; and finishing in sunsets of a surprising richness and beauty, when the mist is lifted up from the earth, and turned into a canopy of unrivalled gorgeousness, purple, rosy, and golden, disclosing the splendid autumn landscape, with its shining rivulets, its varied and mellow woodland tints, and its deep emerald pasture lands, every blade and leaf covered with a thousand little drops, as pure as crystal, glittering and sparkling in the sunbeams like the dew on a summer morning, or the still more brilliant scintillations of frost.

It was in one of these days, early in November, that we set out about noon to pay a visit to a friend at some distance. The fog was yet on the earth, only some brightening in the south-west gave token that it was like to clear away. As yet, however, the mist held complete possession—a much prettier, lighter, and cleaner vapour than that which is defiled with

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London smoke, but every whit as powerful and as delusive. We could not see the shoemaker's shop across the road—no! nor our chaise when it drew up before our door; were fain to guess at our own laburnum tree; and found the sign of the Rose invisible, even when we ran against the sign-post. Our little maid, a kind and careful lass, who, perceiving the dreariness of the weather, followed us across the court with extra wraps, had well nigh tied my veil round her master's hat, and enveloped me in his bearskin; and my dog Mayflower, a white greyhound of the largest size, who had a mind to give us the undesired honour of her company, carried her point, in spite of the united efforts of half-a-dozen active pursuers, simply because the fog was so thick that nobody could see her. It was a complete game at bopeep. Even mine host of the Rose, one of the most alert of her followers, remained invisible, although we heard his voice close beside us.

A misty world it was, and a watery; and I that had been praising the beauty of the fleecy white fog every day for a week before, began to sigh, and shiver, and quake, as much from dread of an overturn as from damp and chilliness, whilst my careful driver and his sagacious steed went on groping their way through the woody lanes that lead to the Loddon. Nothing but the fear of confessing my fear, that feeling which makes so many cowards brave, prevented me from begging to turn back again. On, however, we went, the fog becoming every moment heavier as we approached that beautiful and brimming river, which always, even in the midst of summer, brings with it such images of coolness and freshness as haunt the fancy after reading Undine; and where on the present occasion we seemed literally to breathe water—as Dr. Clarke said in passing the Danube. My companion, nevertheless, continued to assure me that the day would clear—nay, that it was already clearing: and I soon found that he was right. As we left the river we seemed to leave the fog; and before we had reached the pretty village of Barkham the mist had al-

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most disappeared; and I began to lose at once my silent fears and my shivering chilliness, and to resume my cheerfulness and my admiration.

It was curious to observe how object after object glanced out of the vapour. First of all, the huge oak, at the corner of Farmer Locke's field, which juts out into the lane like a crag into the sea, forcing the road to wind round it, stood forth like a hoary giant, with its head lost in the clouds; then Farmer Hewitt's great barn—the house, ricks, and stables still invisible; then a gate, and half a cow, her head being projected over it in strong relief, whilst the hinder part of her body remained in the haze; then, more and more distinctly, hedge-rows, cottages, trees, and fields, until, as we reached the top of Barkham Hill, the glorious sun broke forth, and the lovely picture lay before our eyes in its soft and calm beauty, emerging gradually from the vapour that overhung it, in such manner as the image of his sleeping Geraldine is said to have been revealed to Surrey in the magic glass. A beautiful picture it forms at all times, that valley of Barkham. Fancy a road winding down a hill between high banks, richly studded with huge forest trees, oak and beech, to a sparkling stream, with a foot-bridge thrown across, which runs gurgling along the bottom; then turning abruptly, and ascending the opposite hill, whilst the rich plantations and old paling of a great park "come cranking in" on one side, and two or three irregular cottages go straggling up on the other; the whole bathed in the dewy sunshine, and glowing with the vivid colouring of autumn. The picture had, at the moment of which I speak, an additional interest, by presenting to our eyes the first human being whom we had seen during our drive, (we had heard several;) one, too, who, although he bore little resemblance to the fair mistress of Lord Surrey, was yet sufficiently picturesque, and in excellent keeping with the surrounding scene.

It was a robust, sturdy old man, his long grey hair appear-

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ing between his well-worn hat and his warm but weather-beaten coat, with a large package at his back, covered with oilskin, a bundle of short regular poles in one hand, and a large bunch of thistles in the other; and even before Mayflower, who now made her appearance, and was endeavouring to satisfy her curiosity by pawing and poking the knapsack, thereby awakening the noisy fears of two call-birds, who, together with a large bird-net, formed its contents,—before this audible testimony of his vocation, or the still stronger assurance of his hearty good-humoured visage, my companion, himself somewhat of an amateur in the art, had recognised his friend and acquaintance, Old Robin, the bird-catcher of B.

We soon overtook the old man, and after apologizing for Mayflower's misdemeanour, who by the way seemed sufficiently disposed to renew the assault, we proceeded at the same slow pace up the hill, holding disjointed chat on the badness of the weather these foggy mornings, and the little chance there was of doing much good with the nets so late in the afternoon. To which Robin gave a doleful assent. He was, however, going, he said, to try for a few linnets on the common beyond the Great House, and was in hopes to get a couple of woodlarks from the plantations. He wanted the woodlarks, above all things, for Mrs. Bennet, the alderman's lady of B., whose husband had left the old shop in the Market-place, and built a fine white cottage just beyond the turnpike-gate—so madam had set her heart on a couple of woodlarks, to hang up in her new shrubbery, and make the place look rural.

"Hang up, Robin! Why there is not a tree a foot high in the whole plantation! Woodlarks! Why they'll be dead before Christmas."

"That's sure enough, your honour," rejoined Robin.

"A soft-billed bird, that requires as much care as a nightingale!" continued my companion. "By the way, Robin, have you any nightingales now?"

"Two, Sir; a hen——"

"A hen! That's something remarkable!"

"A great curiosity, Sir; for your honour knows that we always set the trap for nightingales by ear like; the creature is so shy that one can seldom see it, so one is forced to put the mealworm near where one hears the song; and it's the most uncommon thing that can be to catch a hen; but I have one, and a fine cock too, that I caught last spring just afore building time. Two as healthy birds as ever were seen."

"Is the cock in song still?"

"Ay, Sir, in full song; piping away, jug, jug, jug, all the day, and half the night. I wish your honour would come and hear it." And, with a promise to that effect, we parted, each our several ways; we to visit our friend, he to catch, if catch he could, a couple of woodlarks to make Mrs. Bennet's villa look rural.

Old Robin had not always been a bird-catcher. He had, what is called, fallen in the world. His father had been the best-accustomed and most fashionable shoemaker in the town of B., and Robin succeeded, in right of eldership, to his house, his business, his customers, and his debts. No one was ever less fitted for the craft. Birds had been his passion from the time that he could find a nest or string an egg: and the amusement of the boy became the pursuit of the man. No sooner was he his own master than his whole house became an aviary, and his whole time was devoted to breeding, taming, and teaching the feathered race; an employment that did not greatly serve to promote his success as a cordwainer. He married; and an extravagant wife, and a neglected, and therefore unprosperous, business, drove him more and more into the society of the pretty creatures, whose company he had always so greatly preferred to that of the two-legged unfeathered animal, called man. Things grew worse and worse; and at length poor Robin appeared in the Gazette—ruined, as his wife and his customers said, by birds; or, as he himself

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said, by his customers and his wife. Perhaps there was some truth on either side; at least, a thousand pounds of bad debts on his books, and a whole pile of milliners and mantua-makers' bills, went nigh to prove the correctness of his assertion. Ruined, however, he was; and a happy day it was for him, since his stock being sold, his customers gone, and his prospects in trade fairly at an end, his wife (they had no family) deserted him also, and Robin, thus left a free man, determined to follow the bent of his genius, and devote the remainder of his life to the breeding, catching, and selling of birds.

For this purpose he hired an apartment in the ruinous quarter of B. called the Soak, a high, spacious attic, not unlike a barn, which came recommended to him by its cheapness, its airiness, and its extensive cage-room; and his creditors having liberally presented him with all the inhabitants of his aviary, some of which were very rare and curious, as well as a large assortment of cages, nets, traps, and seeds, he began his new business with great spirit, and has continued it ever since with various success, but with unabating perseverance, zeal, and good humour—a very poor and a very happy man. His garret in the Soak is one of the boasts of B.; all strangers go to see the birds and the bird-catcher, and most of his visitors are induced to become purchasers, for there is no talking with Robin on his favourite subject without catching a little of his contagious enthusiasm. His room is quite a menagerie, something like what the feathered department of the ark must have been—as crowded, as numerous, and as noisy.

The din is really astounding. To say nothing of the twitter of whole legions of linnets, goldfinches, and canaries, the latter of all ages; the chattering and piping of magpies, parrots, jackdaws, and bullfinches, in every stage of their education; the deeper tones of blackbirds, thrushes, larks, and nightingales, never fail to swell the chorus, aided by the cooing of doves, the screechings of owls, the squeakings of guinea-pigs, and the eternal grinding of a barrel-organ, which

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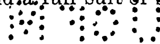
a little damsel of eight years old, who officiates under Robin as feeder and cleaner, turns round, with melancholy monotony, to the loyal and patriotic tunes of *Rule Britannia* and *God save the King*, the only airs, as her master observes, which are sure not to go out of fashion.

Except this young damsel and her music, the apartment exhibits but few signs of human habitation. A macaw is perched on the little table, and a cockatoo chained to the only chair; the roof is tenanted by a choice breed of tumbler pigeons, and the floor cumbered by a brood of curious bantams, unrivalled for ugliness.

Here Robin dwells, in the midst of the feathered population, except when he sallies forth at morning or evening to spread his nets for goldfinches or bullfinches on the neighbouring commons, or to place his trap-cages for the larger birds. Once or twice a year, indeed, he wanders into Oxfordshire, to meet the great flock of linnets, six or seven hundred together, which congregate on those hills, and may be taken by dozens; and he has had ambitious thoughts of trying the great market of Covent-garden for the sale of his live-stock. But in general he remains quietly at home. That nest in the Soak is too precious a deposit to leave long; and he is seldom without some especial favourite to tend and fondle. At present, the hen-nightingale seems his pet; the last was a white blackbird; and once he had a whole brood of gorgeous kingfishers, seven glorious creatures, for whose behoof he took up a new trade and turned fisherman, dabbling all day with a hand-net in the waters of the Soak. It was the prettiest sight in the world to see them snatch the minnows from his hand, with a shy mistrustful tameness, glancing their bright heads from side to side, and then darting off like bits of the rainbow. I had an entire sympathy with Robin's delight in his kingfishers. He sold them to his chief patron, Mr. Jay, a little fidgety old bachelor, with a sharp face, a hooked nose, a brown complexion, and a full suit of snuff-colour, not much unlike a bird



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himself; and that worthy gentleman's mismanagement and a frosty winter killed the kingfishers every one. It was quite affecting to hear poor Robin talk of their death. But Robin has store of tender anecdotes; and any one who has a mind to cry over the sorrows of a widowed turtle-dove, and to hear described to the life her vermilion-eye, black gorget, soft plumage, and plaintive note, cannot do better than pay a visit to the garret in the Soak, and listen for half an hour to my friend the bird-catcher.

MY GODMOTHERS.

Of one of my godmothers I recollect but little. She lived at a distance, and seldom came in my way. The little, however, that I do remember of her, is very pleasing. She was the wife of a dignified clergyman, and resided chiefly in a great cathedral town, to which I once or twice accompanied my father, whose near relation she had married. She was a middle-aged woman, with sons and daughters already settled in life, and must in her youth have been exceedingly lovely; indeed, in spite of an increase of size, which had greatly injured her figure, she might still be deemed a model of matronly beauty. Her face was in the highest degree soft, feminine, and delicate, with an extreme purity and fairness of complexion; dove-like eyes, a gentle smile, and a general complacency and benevolence of aspect, such as I have rarely seen equalled. That sweet face was all sunshine. There was something in her look which realized the fine expression of the poet, when he speaks of—

> ——— "those eyes affectionate and glad,
> That seem'd to love whate'er they look'd upon."

Her voice and manner were equally delightful, equally cap-

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tivating, although quite removed from any of the usual arts of captivation. Their great charm was their perfect artlessness and graciousness, the natural result of a most artless and gracious nature. She kept little company, being so deaf as almost to unfit her for society. But this infirmity, which to most people is so great a disadvantage, seemed in her case only an added charm. She sat on her sofa in sober cheerfulness, placid and smiling, as if removed from the cares and the din of the work-a-day world; or, if any thing particularly interesting was going forward in the apartment, she would look up with such a pretty air of appeal, such silent questioning, as made every body eager to translate for her,—some by loud distinct speech, some by writing, and some by that delicate and mysterious sign manual, that unwritten shorthand, called talking on the fingers, whatever happened to be passing; and she was so attentive and so quick, that one sentence, half a sentence, a word, half a word, would often be enough. She could catch even the zest of a repartee, that most evanescent and least transfusible of all things; and when she uttered her pretty petition, "Mirth, admit me of thy crew!" brought as ready a comprehension, as true a spirit of gaiety, and as much innocent enjoyment into a young and laughing circle, as she found there. Her reliance on the kindness and affection of all around her was unbounded; she judged of others by herself, and was quite free from mistrust and jealousy, the commonest and least endurable infirmity of the deaf. She went out little, but at home her hospitality and benevolence won all hearts. She was a most sweet person. I saw too little of her, and lost her too soon; but I loved her dearly, and still cherish her memory.

Her husband was a very kind and genial person also, although in a different way. The Dean, for such was his professional rank, was a great scholar, an eminent Grecian, a laborious editor, a profound and judicious critic, an acute and sagacious commentator—who passed days and nights in his

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library, covered with learned dust, and deep in the metres. Out of his study he was, as your celebrated scholar is apt to be, exceedingly like a boy just let loose from school, wild with animal spirits, and ripe for a frolic. He was also (another not uncommon characteristic of an eminent Grecian) the most simple-hearted and easy-tempered creature that lived, and a most capital playfellow. I thought no more of stealing the wig from his head than a sparrow does of robbing a cherry-tree; and he, merriest and most undignified of dignitaries, enjoyed the fun as much as I did, would toss the magnificent caxon (a full-bottomed periwig of most capacious dimensions) as high in the air as its own gravity would permit it to ascend, to the unspeakable waste of powder, and then would snatch me up in his arms, (a puny child of eight years old, who was as a doll in his sinewy hands,) and threaten to fling me after his flying peruke. He would have done just the same if he had been Archbishop of Canterbury—and so should I—the archi-episcopal wig would have shared the same fate; so completely did the joyous temperament of the man break down the artificial restraints of his situation. He was a most loveable person was Mr. Dean; but the charm and glory of the Deanery was my dear godmamma.

My other godmother was a very different sort of person, and will take many more words to describe.

Mrs. Patience Wither (for so was she called) was the survivor of three maiden sisters, who, on the death of their father, a rich and well-descended country gentleman, had agreed to live together, and their united portions having centred in her, she was in possession of a handsome fortune. In point of fact, she was not my godmother, having only stood as proxy for her younger sister, Mrs. Mary, my mother's intimate friend, then falling into the lingering decline, of which she afterwards died. Mrs. Mary must have been, to judge of her from universal report, and from a portrait which still remains, a most interesting woman, drooping, pale, and

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mild; and beautiful also, very beautiful, from elegance and expression. She was undoubtedly my real godmamma; but, on her death, Mrs. Patience, partly from regard for her sister, partly out of compliment to my family, and partly, perhaps, to solace herself by the exercise of an office of some slight importance and authority, was pleased to lay claim to me in right of inheritance, and succeeded to the title of my godmother pretty much in the same way that she succeeded to the possession of Flora, her poor sister's favourite spaniel. I am afraid that Flora proved the more grateful subject of the two.

Mrs. Patience was of the sort of women that young people particularly dislike, and characterize by the ominous epithet, *cross*. She was worse than cross; stern, stiff, domineering, and authoritative. Her person was very masculine, tall, square, and large-boned, and remarkably upright. Her features were sufficiently regular, and would not have been unpleasing, but for the keen angry look of her light blue eye, (your blue eye, which has such a name for softness amongst those great mistakers, lovers and poets, is often wild, and almost fierce in its expression,) and her fiery wiry red hair, to which age did no good,—it would not turn grey. In short she was, being always expensively drest, and a good deal in the rear of fashion, not unlike my childish notion of that famous but disagreeable personage, Queen Elizabeth; which comparison being repeated to Mrs. Patience, who luckily took it for a compliment, added considerably to the interest she was so good as to take in my health, welfare, and improvement.

I never saw her but she took possession of me for the purpose of lecturing and documenting on some subject or other,—holding up my head, shutting the door, working a sampler, making a shirt, learning the pence table, or taking physic. She used to hear me read French out of a well-thumbed copy of Telemaque, and to puzzle me with questions from the Eng-

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lish chronology—which may, perhaps, be the reason that I, at this day, to my great shame be it spoken, dislike that famous prose epic, and do not know in what century Queen Anne came to the throne.

In addition to these iniquities, she was assiduous in presents to me at home and at school; sent me cakes with cautions against over-eating, and needle-cases with admonitions to use them; she made over to me her own juvenile library, consisting of a large collection of unreadable books, which I, in my turn, have given away; nay, she even rummaged out for me a pair of old battledores, curiously constructed of netted packthread—the toys of her youth! But bribery is generally thrown away upon children, especially on spoilt ones; the godmother whom I loved never gave me any thing; and every fresh present from Mrs. Patience seemed to me a fresh grievance. I was obliged to make a call and a curtsy, and to stammer out something which passed for a speech; or, which was still worse, to write a letter of thanks—a stiff, formal, precise letter! I would rather have gone without cakes or needle-cases, books or battledores, to my dying day. Such was my ingratitude from five to fifteen.

As time wore on, however, I amended. I began to see the value of constant interest and attention—even although the forms they assumed might not be the most pleasant—to be thankful for her kindness, and attentive to her advice; and by the time I arrived at years of discretion had got to like her very much, especially in her absence, and to endure her presence (when it was quite impossible to run away) with sufficient fortitude. It is only since she has been fairly dead and buried, that I have learnt to estimate her properly. Now, I recollect how very worthy of esteem and respect she really was, how pious, how hospitable, how charitable, how generous! Nothing but the comfort of knowing that she never found it out, could lull my remorse for having disliked her so much in her life-time; the more especially as, upon recollection, I

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don't think she was so absolutely unbearable. She was only a little prejudiced, as one who had lived constantly in one limited sphere; rather ignorant and narrow-minded, a full century behind the spirit of the age, as one who had read dull books and kept dull company; fearfully irritable, fretful, and cross, as one who has had all her life the great misfortune (seldom enough pitied or considered) of having her own way; and superlatively stiff, and starched, and prim, in her quality of old maid. There is a great improvement now-a-days in the matter of single ladies; they may be, and many of them actually are, pleasant with impunity to man or woman, and are so like the rest of the world in way and word, that a stranger is forced to examine the third finger of the left hand, to ascertain whether or no they be married; but Mrs. Patience was an old maid of the old school—there was no mistaking her condition—you might as well question that of the frost-bitten gentlewoman pacing to church through the snow in Hogarth's inimitable and unforgetable "Morning." With these drawbacks she was, as I have said before, an estimable person; staunch in her friendships, liberal in her house-keeping, much addicted to all sorts of subscriptions, and a most active lecturer and benefactress of the poor, whom she scolded and relieved with indefatigable good will.

She lived in a large, tall, upright, stately house, in the largest street of a large town. It was a grave-looking mansion, defended from the pavement by iron palisades, a flight of steps before the sober brown door, and every window curtained and blinded by chintz and silk and muslin, crossing and jostling each other; none of the rooms could be seen from the street, nor the street from any of the rooms—so complete was the obscurity. She seemed to consider this window-veiling as a point of propriety; notwithstanding which, she contrived to know so well all the goings-on of all her neighbours, and who went up or who went down Chapel-street, that I could not help suspecting she had in some one of her many muffling

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draperies a sort of peep-hole, such as you sometimes see a face staring through in the green curtain at the play-house. I am sure she must have had a contrivance of the kind, though I cannot absolutely say that I ever made out the actual slit; but then I was cautious in my pryings, and afraid of being caught. I am sure that a peep-hole there was.

She lived in a good position for an observatory too, her house being situate in a great thoroughfare, one end abutting on a popular chapel, the other on a celebrated dancing academy, so that every day in the week brought affluence of carriages to the one side or the other;—an influx of amusement of which she did not fail to make the most, enjoying it first, and complaining of it afterwards, after the fashion of those unfortunate persons who have a love of grumbling, and very little to grumble at. I don't know what she would have done without the resource afforded by her noisy neighbours, especially those on the saltatory side, whose fiddles, door-knockings, and floor-shakings were the subject of perpetual objurgation; for the usual complaining ground of the prosperous, health and nerves, was completely shut against her. She never was ill in her life, and was too much in the habit of abusing nerves in other people to venture to make use of them on her own account. It was a most comfortable grievance, and completed the many conveniences of her commodious mansion.

Her establishment was handsome and regular, and would have gone on like clock-work, if she had not thought a due portion of managing, that is to say, of vituperation, absolutely necessary for the well-being of herself and her servants. It *did* go on like clock-work, for the well-seasoned domestics no more minded those diurnal scolding fits, than they did the great Japan time-piece in the hall when it struck the hour; a ring of the bell, or a knock at the door, were events much more startling to this staid and sober household, who, chosen, the men for their age, and the women for their ugliness, al-

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ways seemed to me to have a peculiar hatred to quick motion. They would not even run to get out of the way of their mistress, although pretty sure of a lecture, right or wrong, whenever she encountered them. But then, as the fishmonger said of the eels that he was skinning,—" They were used to it."

The only things in the house which she did not scold were two favourite dogs—Flora, a fat, lazy old spaniel, soft and round as a cushion, and almost as inert; and Daphne, a particularly ugly, noisy pug, who barked at every body that came into the house, and bit at most. Daphne was the pet *par excellence.* She *overcrowed* even her mistress, as old Spenser hath it, and Mrs. Patience respected her accordingly. Really, comparing the size of the animal with the astonishing loudness and continuance of her din, she performed prodigies of barking. Her society was a great resource to me, when I was taken to pay my respects to my godmamma. She (I mean Daphne) had, after her surly and snip-snap manner, a kindness for me; condescended to let me pat her head without much growling, and would even take a piece of cake out of my hand without biting my fingers. We were great friends. Daphne's company and conversation lightened the time amazingly. She was certainly the most entertaining person, the most *alive* of any one I met there.

Mrs. Patience's coterie was, to say the truth, rather select than numerous, rather respectable than amusing. It consisted of about half-a-dozen elderly ladies of unexceptionable quality, and one unfortunate gentleman, who met to play a rubber at each other's houses, about six evenings in the week, all the year round, and called on one another nearly every morning. The chief member of this chosen society was, next to Mrs. Patience, who would every where be first, Lady Lane, a widow, and Miss Pym, her maiden sister, who resided with her. Lady Lane was a round, quiet, sleepy woman, not unlike—with reverence be it spoken—to the fat spaniel Flora; you never knew when she was present, or when she was not;

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Miss Pym, sharper and brisker, thinner and shorter, bore more resemblance to my friend Daphne, the vixenish pug—you were pretty sure to hear *her*. There was also a grave and sedate Mrs. Long, a slow, safe, circumspect person, who talked of the weather; a Mrs. Harden, speechifying and civil, and a Miss Harden, her daughter, civiller still. These were the ladies. The beau of the party, Mr. Knight, had been originally admitted in right of a deceased wife, and was retained on his own merits. In my life I never beheld a man so hideously ugly, tall, shambling, and disjointed, with features rough, huge, and wooden, grey hair, stiff and bristly, long shaggy eyebrows, a skin like a hide, and a voice and address quite in keeping with this amiable exterior, as uncouth as Caliban.

For these gifts and accomplishments he was undoubtedly preferred to the honour of being the only gentleman tolerated in this worshipful society, from which Dr. Black, the smart young physician, and Mr. White, the keen, sharp, clever lawyer, and Mr. Brown, the spruce curate of the parish, and even Mr. Green, the portly vicar, were excluded. I did not so much wonder at their admiring Mr. Knight for his ugliness, which was so grotesque and remarkable as to be really prepossessing—it was worth one's while to see any thing so complete in its way; but I did a little marvel at his constancy to this bevy of belles, for, strange and uncouth as the man was, there was an occasional touch of slyness and humour about him, and a perpetual flow of rough kindness, which, joined with his large property, would easily have gained him the entré into more amusing circles. Perhaps he liked to be the sole object of attention to six ladies, albeit somewhat past their prime; perhaps he found amusement in quizzing them—he was wicked enough sometimes to warrant the supposition; perhaps—for mixed motives are commonly the truest in that strangely compounded biped, man—a little of both might influence him; or perhaps a third, and still more powerful

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inducement, might lurk behind, as yet unsuspected. Certain it is, that every evening he was found in that fair circle, cordially welcomed by all its members except my godmamma. She, to be sure, minced and primmed, and tossed her head, and thought they should have been better without him; and although she admitted him to the privilege of visiting at her house, to the coffee, the green tea, the chit-chat, the rubber, the cake, and the liqueur, she carefully refrained from honouring with her presence the annual party at his country farm, where all the other ladies resorted to drink syllabub, and eat strawberries and cream; pertinaciously refused to let him drive her out airing in his handsome open carriage, and even went so far as to order her footman not to let him in when she was alone.

Besides her aversion to mankind in general, an aversion as fierce and active as it was groundless, she had unluckily, from having been assailed by two or three offers, obviously mercenary, imbibed a most unfounded suspicion of the whole sex; and now seldom looked at a man without fancying that she detected in him an incipient lover; sharing in this respect, though from a reverse motive, the common delusion of the pretty and the young. She certainly suspected Mr. Knight of matrimonial intentions towards her fair self, and as certainly suspected him wrongfully. Mr. Knight had no such design; and contrived most effectually to prove his innocence, one fair morning, by espousing Miss Harden, on whom, as she sat dutifully netting by the side of her mamma at one corner of the card-table, I had myself observed him to cast very frequent and significant glances. Miss Harden was a genteel woman of six and thirty, rather faded, but still pleasing, and sufficiently dependent on her mother's life-income, to find in Mr. Knight's large fortune, to say nothing of his excellent qualities, an adequate compensation for his want of beauty. It was altogether a most suitable match, and so pronounced by the world at large, with the solitary exception of Mrs. Pa-

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tience, who, though thus effectually secured from the attentions of her imputed admirer, by no means relished the means by which this desirable end had been accomplished. She sneered at the bride, abused the bridegroom, found fault with the bride-cake, and finally withdrew herself entirely from her former associates, a secession by which, it may be presumed, her own comfort was more affected than theirs.

She now began to complain of solitude, and to talk of taking a niece to reside with her, a commodity of which there was no lack in the family. Her elder brother had several daughters, and desired nothing better than to see one of them adopted by Mrs. Patience. Three of these young ladies came successively on trial—pretty lively girls, so alike, that I scarcely remember them apart, can hardly assign to them a separate individuality, except that, perhaps, Miss Jane might be the tallest, and Miss Gertrude might sing the best. In one particular the resemblance was most striking, their sincere wish to get turned out of favour and sent home again. No wonder! A dismal life it must have seemed to them, used to the liberty and gaiety of a large country house, full of brothers, and sisters, and friends, a quiet indulgent mother, a hearty hospitable father, riding, and singing, and parties, and balls; a doleful contrast it must have seemed to them, poor things, to sit all day in that nicely furnished parlour, where the very chairs seemed to know their places, reading aloud some grave, dull book, or working their fingers to the bone, (Mrs. Patience could not bear to see young people idle,) walking just one mile out and one mile in, on the London road; dining tête-a-tête in all the state of two courses and removes; playing all the evening at back-gammon, most unlucky if they won, and going to bed just as the clock struck ten! No wonder that they exerted all their ingenuity to make themselves disagreeable; and as that is an attempt in which people who set about it with thorough good will are pretty certain to

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succeed, they were discarded, according to their wishes, with all convenient despatch.

Miss Jemima was cashiered for reading novels, contrary to the statutes made and provided—Belinda, the delightful Belinda, sealed her fate. Miss Gertrude was dismissed for catching cold, and flirting with the apothecary, a young and handsome son of Galen, who was also turned off for the same offence. Miss Jane's particular act of delict has slipt my memory,—but she went too. There was some talk of sending little Miss Augusta, the youngest of the family, but she, poor child! never made her appearance. She was her father's favourite, and probably begged off; and they had by this time discovered at the Hall that their young lasses had been used to too much freedom to find the air of Chapel-street agree with them. The only one we ever saw again was Miss Jemima, who, having refused a rich baronet, a good deal older than herself, for no better reason than not liking him, was sent to her aunt's on a visit of penitence; a sort of house of correction—an honourable banishment. I believe in my heart that the fair culprit would have preferred the Treadmill or Botany Bay, had she had her choice; but there was no appeal from the *lettre de cachet* which had consigned her to Mrs. Patience's cares and admonitions, so she took refuge in a dumb resentment. I never saw any one so inveterately sullen in my life. One whole week she remained in this condition, abiding, as best she might, her aunt's never-ending lectures, and the intolerable ennui of the house, during a foggy November. The next, the rejected lover arrived at the door, and was admitted; and before she had been three weeks in Chapel-street, Sir Thomas escorted her home as his intended bride. They were perfectly right in their calculations; rather than have passed the winter with Mrs. Patience, the fair Jemima would have married her grandfather.

Another niece now made her appearance, who, from cir-

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cumstances and situation, seemed peculiarly fitted for the permanent companion and heiress—the orphan daughter of a younger brother, lately deceased, who had left this only child but slenderly provided for. Miss Patience (for she was her aunt's namesake) was a young woman of two-and-twenty, brought up in a remote parsonage, without the advantage of any female to direct her education, and considerably more unformed and unpolished than one is accustomed to see a young lady in this accomplished age. She was a good deal like her aunt in person—far more than comported with beauty—large-boned and red-haired, and looking at least ten years older than she really was. Ten years older, too, she was in disposition; staid, sober, thoughtful, discreet; would no more have read a novel or flirted with an apothecary than Mrs. Patience herself.

Aunt and niece seemed made for each other. But somehow they did not do together. One does not quite know why—perhaps because they were too much alike. They were both great managers; but Miss Patience had been used to a lower range of household cares, and tormented mistress and servants by unnecessary savings and superfluous honesty. Then she was too useful; *would* make the tea, would snuff the candles, would keep the keys; affronted the housekeeper by offering to make the pastry, and the butler by taking under her care the argand lamp; which last exploit was unsuccessful enough—a lamp being a sort of machine that never will submit to female direction; a woman might as well attempt to manage a steam-engine. The luminary in question was particularly refractory. It had four burners, which never, for the three nights which she continued in office, were all in action together. Some sent forth long tongues of flame, like those which issue from the crater of a volcano, giving token of the crash that was to follow; some popped outright, without warning; and some again languished, and died away, leaving behind them a most unsavoury odour. At last the restive

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lamp was abandoned to the butler, and light restored to the drawing-room; and had Miss Patience taken a lesson from this misadventure, all might have gone well.

But Miss Patience was not of a temperament to profit by her own errors. She went on from bad to worse; disobliged Flora by plunging her in the wash-tub, to the great improvement of her complexion; made an eternal enemy of Daphne, by a fruitless attempt to silence her most noisy tongue; and, finally, lectured Mrs. Patience herself for scolding about nothing. In short, she was a reformer, honest, zealous, uncompromising, and indiscreet, as ever wore petticoats. She had in her head the *beau ideal* of a perfect domestic government, and would be satisfied with nothing less. She could not let well alone. So that she had not been a month in that well-ordered and orderly house, before her exertions had thrown every thing into complete disorder; the servants were in rebellion, the furniture topsy-turvy, and the lady, who found herself likely to be in the situation of that dynasty of French kings who reigned *under* a *maire du palais*, in a very justifiable passion. This rightful anger was, however, more moderately expressed than had usually happened with Mrs. Patience's causeless indignation. The aunt remonstrated, indeed, and threatened; but the niece would not stay. She was as unbending as an oak-tree; rejected all compromise; spurned at all concession; abjured all rich relations; and returned to board at a farm-house in her old neighbourhood. After this contumacy her name was never heard in Chapel-street; and for some time the post of companion remained vacant.

At length Mrs. Patience began to break, visibly and rapidly, as the very healthy often do, affording so affecting a contrast with their former strength. In her the decline was merely bodily; neither the mind nor the temper had undergone any change; but her increasing feebleness induced her medical attendants to recommend that some one should be provided to sit with her constantly; and as she protested vehemently

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against any further trial of nieces, the object was sought through the medium of an advertisement, and appeared to be completely attained when it produced Miss Steele. How Miss Steele should have failed to please, still astonishes me. Pliant, soothing, cheerful, mild, with a wonderful command of countenance and of temper, a smiling aspect, a soft voice, a perpetual habit of assentation, and such a power over the very brute beasts, that Flora would get up to meet her, and Daphne would wag her tail at her approach—a compliment which that illustrious pug never paid before to woman. Every heart in Chapel-street did Miss Steele win, except the invulnerable heart of Mrs. Patience. *She* felt the falseness. The honey cloyed; and before two months were over, Miss Steele had followed the nieces.

After this her decline was rapid, and her latter days much tormented by legacy-hunters. A spendthrift nephew besieged her in a morning—a miserly cousin came to lose his sixpences to her at backgammon of an afternoon—a subtle attorney, and an oily physician, had each an eye to her hoards, if only in the form of an executorship; and her old butler, and still older housekeeper, already rich by their savings in her service, married, that they might share together the expected spoil. She died, and disappointed them all. Three wills were found. In the first, she divided her whole fortune between Flora and Daphne, and their offspring, under the direction of six trustees. In the second, she made the County hospital her heir. In the third, the legal and effectual will, after formally disinheriting the rest of her relations, she bequeathed her whole estate, real and personal, to her honest niece Patience Wither, as a reward for her independence. And never was property better bestowed; for Patience the Second, added all that was wanting to the will of Patience the First; supplied every legacy of charity and of kindness; provided for the old servants and the old pets, and had sufficient left to secure her own comfort with a man as upright and as

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downright as herself. They are the most English couple of my acquaintance, and the happiest. Long may they continue so! And all this happiness is owing to the natural right-mindedness and sturdy perception of character of my cross godmamma.

THE MOLE-CATCHER.

THERE are no more delightful or unfailing associations than those afforded by the various operations of the husbandman, and the changes on the fair face of nature. We all know that busy troops of reapers come with the yellow corn; whilst the yellow leaf brings a no less busy train of ploughmen and seedsmen preparing the ground for fresh harvests; that woodbines and wild roses, flaunting in the blossomy hedge-rows, give token of the gay bands of haymakers which enliven the meadows; and that the primroses, which begin to unfold their pale stars by the side of the green lanes, bear marks of the slow and weary female processions, the gangs of tired yet talkative bean-setters, who defile twice a day through the intricate mazes of our cross-country roads. These are general associations, as well known and as universally recognised as the union of mince-pies and Christmas. I have one, more private and peculiar, one, perhaps, the more strongly impressed on my mind, because the impression may be almost confined to myself. The full flush of violets which, about the middle of March, seldom fails to perfume the whole earth, always brings to my recollection one solitary and silent coadjutor of the husbandman's labours, as unlike a violet as possible —Isaac Bint, the mole-catcher.

I used to meet him every spring, when we lived at our old house, whose park-like paddock, with its finely-clumped oaks and elms, and its richly-timbered hedge-rows, edging into

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wild, rude, and solemn fir-plantations, dark, and rough, and hoary, formed for so many years my constant and favourite walk. Here, especially under the great horse-chesnut, and where the bank rose high and naked above the lane, crowned only with a tuft of golden broom; here the sweetest and prettiest of wild flowers, whose very name hath a charm, grew like a carpet under one's feet, enamelling the young green grass with their white and purple blossoms, and loading the air with their delicious fragrance; here I used to come almost every morning, during the violet-tide; and here almost every morning I was sure to meet Isaac Bint.

I think that he fixed himself the more firmly in my memory by his singular discrepancy with the beauty and cheerfulness of the scenery and the season. Isaac is a tall, lean, gloomy personage, with whom the clock of life seems to stand still. He has looked sixty-five for these last twenty years, although his dark hair and beard, and firm manly stride, almost contradict the evidence of his sunken cheeks and deeply-lined forehead. The stride is awful: he hath the stalk of a ghost. His whole air and demeanour savour of one that comes from under ground. His appearance is "of the earth, earthy." His clothes, hands, and face are of the colour of the mould in which he delves. The little round traps which hang behind him over one shoulder, as well as the strings of dead moles which embellish the other, are incrusted with dirt like a tombstone; and the staff which he plunges into the little hillocks, by which he traces the course of his small quarry, returns a hollow sound, as if tapping on the lid of a coffin. Images of the church-yard come, one does not know how, with his presence. Indeed he does officiate as assistant to the sexton in his capacity of grave-digger, chosen, as it should seem, from a natural fitness; a fine sense of congruity in good Joseph Reed, the functionary in question, who felt, without knowing why, that, of all men in the parish, Isaac Bint was best fitted to that solemn office.

His remarkable gift of silence adds much to the impression

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produced by his remarkable figure. I don't think that I ever heard him speak three words in my life. An approach of that bony hand to that earthy leather cap was the greatest effort of courtesy that my daily salutations could extort from him. For this silence, Isaac has reasons good. He hath a reputation to support. His words are too precious to be wasted. Our mole-catcher, ragged as he looks, is the wise man of the village, the oracle of the village inn, foresees the weather, charms away agues, tells fortunes by the stars, and writes notes upon the almanack—turning and twisting about the predictions after a fashion so ingenious, that it is a moot point which is oftenest wrong—Isaac Bint, or Francis Moore. In one eminent instance, our friend was, however, eminently right. He had the good luck to prophesy, before sundry witnesses—some of them sober—in the tap-room of the Bell—he then sitting, pipe in mouth, on the settle at the right-hand side of the fire, whilst Jacob Frost occupied the left;—he had the good fortune to foretell, on New Year's Day 1812, the downfal of Napoleon Buonaparte—a piece of soothsayership which has established his reputation, and dumbfounded all doubters and cavillers, ever since; but which would certainly have been more striking if he had not annually uttered the same prediction, from the same place, from the time that the aforesaid Napoleon became first consul. But this small circumstance is entirely overlooked by Isaac and his admirers, and they believe in him, and he believes in the stars, more firmly than ever.

Our mole-catcher is, as might be conjectured, an old bachelor. Your married man hath more of this world about him—is less, so to say, planet-struck. A thorough old bachelor is Isaac, a contemner and maligner of the sex, a complete and decided woman-hater. Female frailty is the only subject on which he hath ever been known to dilate; he will not even charm away their agues, or tell their fortunes, and, indeed, holds them to be unworthy the notice of the stars.

No woman contaminates his household. He lives on the

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edge of a pretty bit of woodland scenery, called the Penge, in a snug cottage of two rooms, of his own building, surrounded by a garden cribbed from the waste, well fenced with quickset, and well stocked with fruit-trees, herbs, and flowers. One large apple-tree extends over the roof—a pretty bit of colour when in blossom, contrasted with the thatch of the little dwelling, and relieved by the dark wood behind. Although the owner be solitary, his demesne is sufficiently populous. A long row of bee-hives extends along the warmest side of the garden—for Isaac's honey is celebrated far and near; a pig occupies a commodious stye at one corner; and large flocks of ducks and geese (for which the Penge, whose glades are intersected by water, is famous) are generally waiting round a back gate leading to a spacious shed, far larger than Isaac's own cottage, which serves for their feeding and roosting-place. The great tameness of all these creatures —for the ducks and geese flutter round him the moment he approaches, and the very pig follows him like a dog—gives no equivocal testimony of the kindness of our mole-catcher's nature. A circumstance of recent occurrence puts his humanity beyond a doubt.

Amongst the probable causes of Isaac's dislike to women, may be reckoned the fact of his living in a female neighbourhood, (for the Penge is almost peopled with duck-rearers and goose-crammers of the duck and goose gender,) and being himself exceedingly unpopular amongst the fair poultry-feeders of that watery vicinity. He beat them at their own weapons; produced at Midsummer geese fit for Michaelmas; and raised ducks so precocious, that the gardeners complained of them as forerunning their vegetable accompaniments; and "panting *peas* toiled after them in vain." In short, the Naïads of the Penge had the mortification to find themselves driven out of B—— market by an interloper, and that interloper a man, who had no manner of right to possess any skill in an accomplishment so exclusively feminine as duck-rearing; and

being no ways inferior in another female accomplishment, called scolding, to their sister-nymphs of Billingsgate, they set up a clamour and a cackle which might rival the din of their own gooseries at feeding-time, and would inevitably have frightened from the field any competitor less impenetrable than our hero. But Isaac is not a man to shrink from so small an evil as female objurgation. He stalked through it all in mute disdain—looking now at his mole-traps, and now at the stars—pretending not to hear, and very probably not hearing. At first this scorn, more provoking than any retort, only excited his enemies to fresh attacks; but one cannot be always answering another person's silence. The flame which had blazed so fiercely, at last burnt itself out, and peace reigned once more in the green alleys of Penge-wood.

One, however, of his adversaries—his nearest neighbour—still remained unsilenced.

Margery Grover was a very old and poor woman, whom age and disease had bent almost to the earth; shaken by palsy, pinched by penury, and soured by misfortune—a moving bundle of misery and rags. Two centuries ago she would have been burnt for a witch; now she starved and grumbled on the parish allowance; trying to eke out a scanty subsistence by the dubious profits gained from the produce of two geese and a lame gander, once the unmolested tenants of a greenish pool, situate right between her dwelling and Isaac's, but whose watery dominion had been invaded by his flourishing colony.

This was the cause of feud; and although Isaac would willingly, from a mingled sense of justice and of pity, have yielded the point to the poor old creature, especially as ponds are there almost as plentiful as blackberries, yet it was not so easy to control the habits and inclinations of their feathered subjects, who all perversely fancied that particular pool; and various accidents and skirmishes occurred, in which the ill-fed and weak birds of Margery had generally the worst of the fray. One of her

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early goslings was drowned—an accident which may happen even to water-fowl; and her lame gander, a sort of pet with the poor old woman, injured in his well leg; and Margery vented curses as bitter as those of Sycorax; and Isaac, certainly the most superstitious personage in the parish—the most thorough believer in his own gifts and predictions—was fain to nail a horse-shoe on his door for the defence of his property, and to wear one of his own ague charms about his neck for his personal protection.

Poor old Margery! A hard winter came; and the feeble, tottering creature shook in the frosty air like an aspen-leaf; and the hovel in which she dwelt—for nothing could prevail on her to try the shelter of the workhouse—shook like herself at every blast. She was not quite alone either in the world or in her poor hut: husband, children, and grandchildren had passed away; but one young and innocent being, a great-grandson, the last of her descendants, remained, a helpless dependent on one almost as helpless as himself.

Little Harry Grover was a shrunken, stunted boy, of five years old; tattered and squalid, like his grandame, and, at first sight, presented almost as miserable a specimen of childhood, as Margery herself did of age. There was even a likeness between them; although the fierce blue eye of Margery had, in the boy, a mild appealing look, which entirely changed the whole expression of the countenance. A gentle and a peaceful boy was Harry, and, above all, a useful. It was wonderful how many ears of corn in the autumn, and sticks in the winter, his little hands could pick up! how well he could make a fire, and boil the kettle, and sweep the hearth, and cram the goslings! Never was a handier boy or a trustier; and when the united effects of cold, and age, and rheumatism confined poor Margery to her poor bed, the child continued to perform his accustomed offices; fetching the money from the vestry, buying the loaf at the baker's, keeping house, and nursing the sick woman, with a kindness and thoughtfulness, which none

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but those who know the careful ways to which necessity trains cottage children would deem credible; and Margery, a woman of strong passions, strong prejudices, and strong affections, who had lived in and for the desolate boy, felt the approach of death imbittered by the certainty that the workhouse, always the scene of her dread and loathing, would be the only refuge for the poor orphan.

Death, however, came on visibly and rapidly; and she sent for the overseer to beseech him to put Harry to board in some decent cottage; she could not die in peace until he had promised; the fear of the innocent child's being contaminated by wicked boys and godless women preyed upon her soul; she implored, she conjured. The overseer, a kind but timid man, hesitated, and was beginning a puzzled speech about the bench and the vestry, when another voice was heard from the door of the cottage.

"Margery," said our friend Isaac, "will you trust Harry to me? I am a poor man, to be sure; but, between earning and saving, there'll be enough for me and little Harry. 'Tis as good a boy as ever lived. and I'll try to keep him so. Trust him to me, and I'll be a father to him. I can't say more."

"God bless thee, Isaac Bint! God bless thee!" was all poor Margery could reply.

They were the last words she ever spoke. And little Harry is living with our good mole-catcher, and is growing plump and rosy; and Margery's other pet, the lame gander, lives and thrives with them too.

MADEMOISELLE THERÈSE.

One of the prettiest dwellings in our neighbourhood, is the Lime Cottage at Burley-Hatch. It consists of a small low-browed habitation, so entirely covered with jessamine, honey-

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suckle, passion-flowers, and china roses, as to resemble a bower, and is placed in the centre of a large garden,—turf and flowers before, vegetables and fruit-trees behind, backed by a superb orchard, and surrounded by a quickset hedge, so thick, and close, and regular, as to form an impregnable defence to the territory which it encloses—a thorny rampart, a living and growing *chevaux-de-frise*. On either side of the neat gravel walk, which leads from the outer gate to the door of the cottage, stand the large and beautiful trees to which it owes its name; spreading their strong, broad shadow over the turf beneath, and sending, on a summer afternoon, their rich, spicy fragrance half across the irregular village green, dappled with wood and water, and gay with sheep, cattle, and children, which divides them, at the distance of a quarter of a mile, from the little hamlet of Burley, its venerable church and handsome rectory, and its short straggling street of cottages and country shops.

Such is the habitation of Thérèse de G., an emigrée of distinction, whose aunt having married an English officer, was luckily able to afford her niece an asylum during the horrors of the Revolution, and to secure to her a small annuity and the Lime Cottage after her death. There she has lived for these five-and-thirty years, gradually losing sight of her few and distant foreign connexions, and finding all her happiness in her pleasant home and her kind neighbours—a standing lesson of cheerfulness and contentment.

A very popular person is Mademoiselle Thérèse—popular both with high and low; for the prejudice which the country people almost universally entertain against foreigners, vanished directly before the charm of her manners, the gaiety of her heart, and the sunshine of a temper that nevers knows a cloud. She is so kind to them too, so liberal of the produce of her orchard and garden, so full of resource in their difficulties, and so sure to afford sympathy if she have nothing else to give, that the poor all idolize Mademoiselle. Among the rich,

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she is equally beloved. No party is complete without the pleasant Frenchwoman, whose amenity and cheerfulness, her perfect, general politeness, her attention to the old, the poor, the stupid, and the neglected, are felt to be invaluable in society. Her conversation is not very powerful either, nor very brilliant; she never says any thing remarkable—but then it is so good-natured, so genuine, so unpretending, so constantly up and alive, that one would feel its absence far more than that of a more showy and ambitious talker;—to say nothing of the charm which it derives from her language, which is alternately the most graceful and purest French, and the most diverting and absurd broken English;—a dialect in which, whilst contriving to make herself perfectly understood both by gentle and simple, she does also contrive, in the course of an hour, to commit more blunders than all the other foreigners in England make in a month.

Her appearance betrays her country almost as much as her speech. She is a French-looking little personage, with a slight, active figure, exceedingly nimble and alert in every movement; a round and darkly-complexioned face, somewhat faded and *passée*, but still striking from the laughing eyes, the bland and brilliant smile, and the great mobility of expression. Her features, pretty as they are, want the repose of an English countenance; and her air, gesture, and dress, are decidedly foreign, all alike deficient in the English charm of quietness. Nevertheless, in her youth, she must have been pretty; so pretty that some of our young ladies, scandalized at finding their favourite an old maid, have invented sundry legends to excuse the solecism, and talk of duels fought *pour l'amour de ses beaux yeux*, and of a betrothed lover guillotined in the Revolution. And the thing may have been so; although one meets every where with old maids who have been pretty, and whose lovers have not been guillotined; and although Mademoiselle Thérèse has not, to do her justice, the least in the world the air of a heroine crossed in love. The thing may be

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so, but I doubt it much. I rather suspect our fair Demoiselle of having been in her youth a little of a flirt. Even during her residence at Burley-Hatch, hath not she indulged in divers very distant, very discreet, very decorous, but still very evident flirtations? Did not Doctor Abdy, the portly, ruddy schoolmaster of B., dangle after her for three mortal years, holidays excepted? And did she not refuse him at last? And Mr. Foreclose, the thin, withered, wrinkled city solicitor, a man, so to say, smoke-dried, who comes down every year to Burley for the air, did not he do suit and service to her during four long vacations, with the same ill success? Was not Sir Thomas himself a little smitten? Nay, even now, does not the good major, a halting veteran of seventy—but really it is too bad to tell tales out of the parish—all that is certain is, that Mademoiselle Thérèse might have changed her name long before now, had she so chosen; and that it is most probable that she will never change it at all.

Her household consists of her little maid Betsy, a cherry-cheeked, blue-eyed country lass, brought up by herself, who, with a full clumsy figure, and a fair, innocent, unmeaning countenance, copies, as closely as these obstacles will permit, the looks and gestures of her alert and vivacious mistress, and has even caught her broken English;—of a fat lap-dog, called Fido, silky, sleepy, and sedate;—and of a beautiful white Spanish ass, called Donnabella, an animal docile and spirited, far beyond the generality of that despised race, who draws her little donkey-chaise half the country over, runs to her the moment she sees her, and eats roses, bread, and apples from her hand; but who, accustomed to be fed and groomed, harnessed and driven, only by females, resists and rebels the moment she is approached by the rougher sex; has overturned more boys, and kicked more men, than any donkey in the kingdom; and has acquired such a character for restiveness amongst the grooms in the neighbourhood, that when Made-

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moiselle Thérèse goes out to dinner, Betsy is fain to go with her to drive Donnabella home again, and to return to fetch her mistress in the evening.

If every body is delighted to receive this most welcome visitor, so is every body delighted to accept her graceful invitations, and meet to eat strawberries at Burley-Hatch. Oh, how pleasant are those summer afternoons, sitting under the blossomed limes, with the sun shedding a golden light through the broad branches, the bees murmuring over head, roses and lilies all about us, and the choicest fruit served up in wicker baskets of her own making—itself a picture! the guests looking so pleased and happy, and the kind hostess the gayest and happiest of all. Those are pleasant meetings; nor are her little winter parties less agreeable, when to two or three female friends assembled round their coffee, she will tell thrilling stories of that terrible Revolution, so fertile in great crimes and great virtues; or gayer anecdotes of the brilliant days preceding that convulsion, the days which Madame de Genlis has described so well, when Paris was the capital of pleasure, and amusement the business of life; illustrating her descriptions by a series of spirited drawings of costumes and characters done by herself, and always finishing by producing a group of Louis Seize, Marie Antoinette, the Dauphin, and Madame Elizabeth, as she had last seen them at Versailles—the only recollection that ever brings tears into her smiling eyes.

Mademoiselle Thérèse's loyalty to the Bourbons was in truth a very real feeling. Her family had been about the court, and she had imbibed an enthusiasm for the royal sufferers natural to a young and a warm heart—she loved the Bourbons, and hated Napoleon with like ardour. All her other French feelings had for some time been a little modified. She was not quite so sure as she had been, that France was the only country, and Paris the only city of the world; that Shakspeare was a barbarian, and Milton no poet; that the perfume of English

limes was nothing compared to French orange trees; that the sun never shone in England; and that sea-coal fires were bad things. She still, indeed, would occasionally make these assertions, especially if dared to make them; but her faith in them was shaken. Her loyalty to her legitimate king was, however, as strong as ever, and that loyalty had nearly cost us our dear Mademoiselle. After the Restoration, she hastened as fast as steam-boat and diligence could carry her, to enjoy the delight of seeing once more the Bourbons at the Thuilleries; took leave, between smiles and tears, of her friends, and of Burley-Hatch, carrying with her a branch of the lime-tree, then in blossom, and commissioning her old lover, Mr. Foreclose, to dispose of the cottage; but in less than three months, luckily before Mr. Foreclose had found a purchaser, Mademoiselle Thérèse came home again. She complained of nobody; but times were altered. The house in which she was born was pulled down; her friends were scattered, her kindred dead; Madame did not remember her (she had probably never heard of her in her life); the king did not know her again (poor man! he had not seen her for these thirty years); Paris was a new city; the French were a new people; she missed the sea-coal fires; and for the stunted orange-trees at the Thuilleries, what were they compared with the blossomed limes of Burley-Hatch!

LOST AND FOUND.

Any body may be lost in a wood. It is well for me to have so good an excuse for my wanderings! for I am rather famous for such misadventures, and have sometimes been accused by my kindest friends of committing intentional blunders, and going astray out of malice prepense. To be sure, when in

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two successive rambles I contrived to get mazed on Burghfield Common, and bewildered in Kibe's Lane, those exploits did seem to overpass the common limits of stupidity. But in a wood, and a strange wood, a new place, a fresh country, untrodden ground beneath the feet, unknown land-marks before the eyes, wiser folks than I might require the silken clue of Rosamond, or the bag of ashes given to Finette Cendron (Anglice, Cinderella) by the good fairy her godmother, to help them home again. Now my luck exceeded even hers of the Glass Slipper, for I found something not unlike the good fairy herself, in the pleasant earthly guise of an old friend. But I may as well begin my story.

About two years ago we had the misfortune to lose one of the most useful and popular inhabitants of our village, Mrs. Bond, the butterwoman. She—for although there was a very honest and hardworking Farmer Bond, who had the honour to be Mrs. Bond's husband, she was so completely the personage of the family that nobody ever thought of him—she lived on a small dairy-farm at the other side of the parish, where she had reared ten children in comfort and respectability, contriving in all years, and in all seasons, to look, and to be, flourishing, happy, and contented, and to drive her tilted cart twice a week into B., laden with the richest butter, the freshest eggs, and the finest poultry of the county. Never was market-woman so reliable as Mrs. Bond, so safe to deal with, or so pleasant to look at. She was a neat comely woman of five-and-forty, or thereabout, with dark hair, laughing eyes, a bright smile, and a brighter complexion—red and white like a daisy. People used to say how pretty she must have been; but I think she was then in the prime of her good looks; just as a full-blown damask rose is more beautiful than the same flower in the bud.

Very pleasant she was to look at, and still pleasanter to talk to; she was so gentle, so cheerful, so respectful, and so kind. Every body in the village loved Mrs. Bond. Even Lizzy and

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May, the two most aristocratical of its inhabitants, and the most tenacious of the distinctions of rank, would run to meet the butter-cart as if it were a carriage and four. A mark of preference which the good-humoured dairywoman did not fail to acknowledge and confirm by gifts suited to their respective tastes, an occasional pitcher of buttermilk to May, and a stick with cherries tied round it to poor Lizzy.

Nor was Mrs. Bond's bounty confined to largesses of so suspicious a nature, as presents to the pets of a good customer. I have never known any human being more thoroughly and universally generous, more delicate in her little gifts, or with so entire an absence of design or artifice in her attentions. It was a prodigality of kindness that seemed never weary of well-doing. What posies of pinks and sweet-williams, backed by marjoram and rosemary, she used to carry to the two poor old ladies who lodged at the pastry-cook's at B.! What faggots of lilac and laburnum she would bring to deck the poor widow Hay's open hearth! What baskets of water-cresses, the brownest, the bitterest, and the crispest of the year, for our fair neighbour, the nymph of the shoe-shop, a delicate girl, who could only be tempted into her breakfast by that pleasant herb! What pots of honey for John Brown's cough! What gooseberries and currants for the baker's little children! And as soon as her great vine ripened, what grapes for every body! No wonder that when Mrs. Bond left the parish, to occupy a larger farm in a distant county, her absence was felt as a misfortune by the whole village; that poor Lizzy inquired after her every day for a week, and that May watched for the tilted cart every Wednesday and Friday for a month or more.

I myself joined very heartily in the general lamentation. But time and habit reconcile us to most privations, and I must confess that, much as I liked her, I had nearly forgotten our good butterwoman, until an adventure which befell me last week placed me once more in the way of her ready kindness.

I was on a visit at a considerable distance from home, in

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one of the most retired parts of Oxfordshire. Nothing could be more beautiful than the situation, or less accessible; shut in amongst woody hills, remote from great towns, with deep chalky roads, almost impassable, and a broad bridgeless river, coming, as if to intercept your steps, whenever you did seem to have fallen into a beaten track. It was exactly the country and the season in which to wander about all day long.

One fair morning I set out on my accustomed ramble. The sun was intensely hot; the sky almost cloudless; I had climbed a long abrupt ascent, to enjoy the sight of the magnificent river, winding like a snake amidst the richly-clothed hills; the pretty village, with its tapering spire; and the universal freshness and brilliancy of the gay and smiling prospect—too gay perhaps! I gazed till I became dazzled with the glare of the sunshine, oppressed by the very brightness, and turned into a beech-wood by the side of the road, to seek relief from the overpowering radiance. These beech-woods should rather be called coppices. They are cut down occasionally, and consist of long flexible stems, growing out of the old roots. But they are like no other coppices, or rather none other can be compared with them. The young beechen stems, perfectly free from underwood, go arching and intertwining over head, forming a thousand mazy paths, covered by a natural trellis; the shining green leaves, just bursting from their golden sheaths, contrasting with the smooth silvery bark, shedding a cool green light around, and casting a thousand dancing shadows on the mossy flowery path, pleasant to the eye and to the tread, a fit haunt for wood-nymph or fairy. There is always much of interest in the mystery of a wood; the uncertainty produced by the confined boundary; the objects which crowd together, and prevent the eye from penetrating to any distance; the strange flickering mixture of shadow and sunshine, the sudden flight of birds—oh, it was enchanting! I wandered on, quite regardless of time or distance, now admiring the beautiful wood-sorrel which sprang up amongst the old roots

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—now plucking the fragrant wood-roof—now trying to count the countless varieties of woodland-moss, till, at length, roused by my foot's catching in a rich trail of the white-veined ivy, which crept, wreathing and interlaced, over the ground, I became aware that I was completely lost, had entirely forsaken all track, and out-travelled all landmarks. The wood was, I knew, extensive, and the ground so tumbled about, that every hundred yards presented some flowery slope or broken dell, which added greatly to the picturesqueness of the scenery, but very much diminished my chance of discovery or extrication.

In this emergency, I determined to proceed straight onward, trusting in this way to reach at last one side of the wood, although I could not at all guess which; and I was greatly solaced, after having walked about a quarter of a mile, to find myself crossed by a rude cart track ; and still more delighted, on proceeding a short distance farther, to hear sounds of merriment and business ; none of the softest, certainly, but which gave token of rustic habitation ; and to emerge suddenly from the close wood, amongst an open grove of huge old trees, oaks, with their brown plaited leaves, cherries, covered with snowy garlands, and beeches, almost as gigantic as those of Windsor Park, contrasting, with their enormous trunks and majestic spread of bough, the light and flexible stems of the coppice I had left.

I had come out at one of the highest points of the wood, and now stood on a platform overlooking a scene of extraordinary beauty. A little to the right, in a very narrow valley, stood an old farm-house, with pointed roofs and porch and pinnacles, backed by a splendid orchard, which lay bathed in the sunshine, exhaling its fresh aromatic fragrance, all one flower; just under me was a strip of rich meadow land, through which a stream ran sparkling, and directly opposite a ridge of hanging coppices, surrounding and crowning, as it were, an immense old chalk-pit, which, overhung by bramble, ivy, and a

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hundred pendent weeds, irregular and weather-stained, had an air as venerable and romantic as some grey ruin. Seen in the gloom and stillness of evening, or by the pale glimpses of the moon, it would have required but little aid from the fancy to picture out the broken shafts and mouldering arches of some antique abbey. But, besides that daylight is the sworn enemy of such illusions, my attention was imperiously claimed by a reality of a very different kind. One of the gayest and noisiest operations of rural life—sheep-washing—was going on in the valley below—

> "the turmoil that unites
> Clamour of boys with innocent despites
> Of barking dogs, and bleatings from strange fear."
>
> WORDSWORTH.

All the inhabitants of the farm seemed assembled in the meadow. I counted a dozen at least of men and boys of all ages, from the stout, sunburnt, vigorous farmer of fifty, who presided over the operation, down to the eight-year old urchin, who, screaming, running, and shaking his ineffectual stick after an eloped sheep, served as a sort of aide-de-camp to the sheep-dog. What a glorious scene of confusion it was! what shouting! what scuffling! what glee! Four or five young men, and one amazon of a barefooted girl, with her petticoats tucked up to her knees, stood in the water where it was pent between two hurdles, ducking, sousing, and holding down by main force, the poor frightened, struggling sheep, who kicked, and plunged, and bleated, and butted, and, in spite of their imputed innocence, would certainly, in the ardour of self-defence, have committed half-a-dozen homicides, if their power had equalled their inclination. The rest of the party were fully occupied; some in conducting the purified sheep, who showed a strong disposition to go the wrong way, back to their quarters; others in leading the uncleansed part of the flock to their destined ablution, from which they also testified a very ardent and active desire to escape. Dogs, men, boys,

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and girls were engaged in marshalling these double processions, the order of which was constantly interrupted by the outbreaking of some runaway sheep, who turned the march into a pursuit, to the momentary increase of the din, which seemed already to have reached the highest possible pitch.

The only quiet persons in the field were a delicate child of nine years old, and a blooming woman of forty-five—a comely blooming woman, with dark hair, bright eyes, and a complexion like a daisy, who stood watching the sheep-washers with the happiest smiles, and was evidently the mother of half the lads and lasses in the melée. It could be, and it was, no other than my friend Mrs. Bond, and resolving to make myself and my difficulties known to her, I scrambled down no very smooth or convenient path, and keeping a gate between me and the scene of action, contrived, after sundry efforts, to attract her attention.

Here of course my difficulties ceased. But if I were to tell how glad she was to see her old neighbour, how full of kind questions and of hospitable cares,—how she would cut the great cake intended for the next day's sheep-shearing, would tap her two-year-old currant wine, would gather a whole bush of early honeysuckles, and finally, would see me home herself, I being, as she observed, rather given to losing my way:—if I were to tell all these things, when should I have done? I will rather conclude in the words of an old French Fairy tale—Je crains déjà d'avoir abusé de la patience du lecteur. Je finis avant qu'il me dise de finir.

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INTRODUCTORY LETTER.*

TO MISS W.

Feb. 20, 1830.

No, my dearest Mary, the severe domestic calamity which we have experienced will not, as you expect, and as many of our other friends seem to anticipate, drive us from our favourite village. On the contrary, the cottage home, in which she, used to such very different accommodation, closed her peaceful and blameless life, the country church in which her remains lie buried, and the kind neighbours by whom she was so universally respected and beloved, are now doubly endeared to us by their connexion with her whom we have lost. There is no running away from a great grief. Happy are they to whom, as in our case, it comes softened and sanctified by the recollection of the highest and most amiable virtues clothed in manners the most feminine and the most ladylike. To them memory will be the best comforter, for such memories are rare. No, dearest Mary, we certainly shall not think of removing on this account.

But, besides that our affliction is too real and too recent † to dwell upon, I have no right to sadden you with my sadness. I will rather try to escape from it myself, and to answer, as best I may, your kind questions on other subjects, particularly those respecting the place in which you take so kind a concern, and such of its inhabitants as have had the good fortune to interest you.

Our Village (many thanks for your polite inquiry) continues to stand pretty much where it did, and has undergone as little change in the last two years as any hamlet of its inches in the county. Just now it is in an awful state of dirt and dinginess, the white nuisance of snow having subsided into the brown nuisance of mud in the roads, whilst the slippery treachery of ice is converted into the less dangerous but more deplorable misery of sloppiness on the foot way. They talk of the snow as having been so many feet deep. I wonder whether any one has undertaken to sound the depth of the dirt. Over pattens and over boots gives but a faint and modified notion of the discomforts of a country walk during the present fine thaw, to say nothing of the heavy clinging dripping annoyance, called draggled tails.

We feel these evils the more since they are of a kind from which our

* [To the Fourth Series of the original edition.]

† My beloved and excellent mother died on the morning of New Year's day.

light dry gravelly soil generally protects us. And even now we hav the comfort of knowing, not so much that we are better off than our neighbours, but that they are worse off than ourselves—a comfort, the value of which nobody who has not had cause to feel it can duly appreciate. Their superior calamity arises not merely from the snow and the thaw, grievances which we endured in common, but from the Loddon on one side of us, and the Kennet and Thames on the other, having embraced so fair an opportunity of playing their usual pranks and overflowed the country round, as if governed by the malicious water sprite, (I forget the gentleman's name,) who popped his head out of a well and flooded the heroine's castle and territory in Undine. So far as all the meadows and half the cellars north, south, east, and west of our village being under water may afford us comfort, we possess it in perfection. Another consolation, although rather prospective than present, may be found in the fact, that to judge from certain islands of gravel rising at intervals through the mud, our road is about to undergo the operation of mending—that excruciating operation which horses, drivers, and passengers hate so thoroughly in its progress, and like so well in its consequences. In our village proper, other changes have we none.

On the outskirts of the parish, indeed, improvement hath not been idle. The fine place on the top of the hill, the Park, as it is called, hath undergone no less a transmogrification than that of Grecian to Gothic, one of those changes which people hold themselves privileged to criticise; and they are seldom slack to exercise that privilege, because to discover faults looks wise, but which in richness and variety generally contrives to please the eye, and to be quite as pretty as if all the world were agreed to call it so. I have no doubt, judging from the praise and the blame, but I shall like the building. By the way the Park, our only point of change, hath undergone in its own person alteration enough to serve the whole parish. Besides the Gothic casing of the mansion, the grounds have been improved; plantations of twenty years' growth transplanted; trees double that age made to change sides, according to the bold practice of now-a-days; and the hill on which the house stands pared off to let in the water, by a body of excavators (navigators our villagers by an ingenious slip-slopism were pleased to call them) imported from afar. Altogether the Park is a new place.

Amongst our inhabitants we have the usual portion of mutability. Besides those graver changes of which the Parish Register keeps account, there has been considerable movement and fluctuation in our little colony. Many of the old settlers have migrated, and some new ones have arrived. The most notable of these changes is the departure of the female blacksmith and her noisy progeny, who are now dispersed over half the forges

in the county, to the probable improvement of their din and the certain abatement of ours. Not that we are particularly quiet now—that would be too much to say, but the village clamour has changed its character. Before there was a sort of contest in loudness between the geese and the boys; now the geese have it hollow. Nobody thinks of complaining of the children, or even of hearing them, whilst their rivals are railed at from morning to night, and have even become of note enough to be threatened with an indictment.

The present occupier of the forge is John Ford, the civil intelligent husband of our pretty neighbour, the lass of the shoe-shop. They are fairly settled in the blacksmith's territories with their little girl, who, being the only child of an only child, and having two grandfathers, two grandmothers, and one great grandfather, is of course cried up for the most wonderful wonder of wonders that ever trod the earth; and really, without being her grandmother or her great grandmother, I cannot help admiring the little damsel myself, it's such a delicate fairy, so merry, and so full of glee.

In addition to our new blacksmith, we have a new shoemaker, a new collar-maker, a new carpenter, and a new baker, although the last mentioned personage is non-resident, and only perambulates the village in his cart; to say nothing of the newest of all our novelties, a new schoolmaster, elected yesterday. Each of these functionaries is of some note in his particular calling, especially the baker, who is eminent for his loaves, which are crusty, and his temper, which is not; but the acquisition which interests me most, is the new occupant of the wheelwright's pretty apartments, a lady whom you must know some day or other, and who is to me a delightful companion and a most valuable friend. She must never go away, for what would our village do without her!

Now to the rustic lovers after whom you inquired with so kind an interest: Jem and Mabel are married; Joel and Harriet are not; their affair stands much as it did, a regular engagement, with intermitting fits of flirtation on the lady's side, and of jealousy on the part of the gentleman. Some day or other I suppose they will marry; but really they are such a handsome couple, and their little quarrels are so amusing, that it will be quite a pity to put an end to the courtship. The third and last pair of turtle doves, Daniel Tubb and Sally North, remain also unwedded in spite of the indications on Valentine's day, which even the experience of the lame Clerk deemed infallible. Somehow or other the affair went off. Poor Stephen Long, the other hero of that adventure—how like you it is to take pity on one whom nobody else thinks worth caring for!—poor Master Stephen, our small London apprentice, met during that very visit with another misfortune in the same line, and as the poor little per-

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son seems rather to have taken your fancy I may as well tell you the story now.

Before his adventure with Miss Sally North was fairly over, that is to say, before that relentless damsel had set him free from her basket,* Master Stephen Long began to discover, as rejected lovers sometimes do, that he would not have been accepted for the world; not that he bore any ill will to the young person, but that he had no taste for giantesses, and a particular aversion for hoydens and tomboys, and women who trespassed against the delicacy of their sex; and no sooner was he safely dismounted from the fair head on which he had remained perched in most ludicrous wrath, restrained from jumping down by a mingled fear of hurting Sally and hurting himself, and looking much like one of those non-descript animals rampant which so often serve as a crest in heraldry;—no sooner was he fairly on the ground than he communicated in very chosen terms to his obdurate mistress, his opinion of the escape which he had had in not marrying her, and bowed himself off. It is said that our rural coquet, for as little as she cared for her cockney lover, was somewhat piqued at this cool resignation; and that his portly and good-humoured rival, her chosen Valentine, had a good deal of huffing and brusquerie to endure on the occasion, Sally having followed the example of her betters, by revenging on the innocent object in her power the affronts offered her by the culprit who was not;—nay, so much did she take his defection to heart, that it was even whispered in the village, that a tender speech, or a copy of verses, or a new riband from Stephen, might have replaced their love affair in statu quo.

None such arrived. Stephen had done with her. "It had been a boyish choice," as he said to himself, with all the importance of a young gentleman who has just entered his nineteenth year, "a boyish mistake; his next choice should be wiser, wise and deliberate; he had plenty of time before him." Accordingly he walked round the parish, and fell in love again, or thought he fell in love, before noon on the same day. Nothing so easy as catching a heart on the rebound; especially such a heart as Master Stephen's, who, in spite of his being the very cleverest boy in Aberleigh School, and one of the cleverest 'prentices in Cheapside, a proser, a poet, an orator, and a critic, was, between conceit and kind-heartedness and a spice of romance, one of the simplest persons that ever existed. It was a good-natured manikin too, and a generous; and would not have seemed so very ugly, or so very small, or so ridiculously like the picture of the monkey that has seen the world in the older editions of Gay's Fables, but for the caricature of fashion exhibited in its dress, and the perking, strutting air, the elevated chin, the tiptoe walk, and the vain

* Vide Vol. I. of Our Village, page 511.

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endeavour to pass for tall, which pervaded the whole little person, producing exactly such a copy of the gait and mien of a full-grown man, as that ambitious bird a he-bantam exhibits of the size and actions of the great cock of the farm-yard. A kind youth nevertheless was Stephen Long, a kind and well-disposed youth; dutiful to his grandmother, who was very fond of him, and, being nearly blind, approached nearer his own estimate of his personal graces than any body else; respectful to his father; affectionate to his brothers and sisters; and civil to the whole world. He made the tour of the village that very morning, and it was on a visit to his old acquaintance, the mistress of the shop, that he had the good luck to lose over again the heart which would otherwise have hung so heavily on his hands.

Peggy Norman, his new lady-love, was a little serving maiden, living at Captain Selby's, a family of some gentility in Aberleigh, and had the neatness of dress, and the general gentillesse of appearance, belonging almost exclusively to the class of soubrettes. Pretty she could hardly be called; and yet there was much attraction in her trim girlish figure, so light and round and youthful, her thick curling brown hair, the dazzling red and white of her brilliant complexion, as brightly contrasted as the colours in an apple-blossom, the broad smile disclosing a set of white even teeth, to say nothing of a very pretty dimple, and the whole expression of her bright blue eyes, whose arch glance, when suddenly thrown up, formed an excellent accompaniment to the broad dimpled smile, and harmonized well with the naïveté and espièglerie of her voice and manner. It was the most agreeable manner that could be conceived, very gentle, very respectful, and very gay. Mrs. Selby, pleased with her young liquid voice, her pretty accent, her constant simplicity and occasional acuteness, and exceedingly amused by the new form in which her own opinions and remarks were sometimes returned to her by her docile attendant, had encouraged her light-hearted prattle, so that, without any touch of presumption or pertness, Peggy felt the security of pleasing, proper to a spoilt child, joined to a constitutional desire to please, which spoilt children are seldom lucky enough to possess. She was a perfect little rose-bud of fifteen, and all the more dangerous to Stephen Long because she was little, he having contracted a remarkable aversion to the entire race of giantesses.

The errand on which Peggy had been sent to the territories of Mrs. White being of a nature to detain her a considerable time, she having been ordered to match unmatchable silk with unprocurable cotton, Stephen had ample opportunity for falling in love, and even for making love; and before the grand question was decided whether the yellow, the blue, or the brown balls, of which Mrs. White's stock was composed,

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made the nearest approach to her green pattern, a very promising flirtation had commenced, greatly promoted by the complaisant mistress of the shop, who invited both parties to drink tea with her on the succeeding evening.

They met accordingly, and the love-affair proceeded most prosperously. Stephen had the happiness to find in this new flame a degree of literary acquirement which stood in the most advantageous contrast to the positive duncicality of Sally North. Mrs. Selby being a literary lady, Peggy had heard the names of authors and the titles of books; she had even a personal acquaintance with the outside of periodical literature, knew the colours of magazines, the backs of reviews, and the shapes of newspapers; could tell at a glance the Edinburgh from the Quarterly, and the John Bull from the Literary Gazette; was familiar with the grim face on Blackwood, and knew at a touch the Old Monthly from the New. Stephen was in raptures. In another respect, too, they met on even terms. Peggy had recently accompanied her mistress to London, had spent a whole fortnight there, and was so charmed with the gaiety and hurly-burly of that great noisy good-for-nothing pleasant place, always delightful to healthy and lively youth, that she could talk of nothing else, and had certainly brought back with her a slight feeling of contempt (pity she was pleased to call it) for the less fortunate bumpkins who had never heard the sound of Bow Bell. True it is that in talking of London, Peggy and Stephen meant very different places,—Stephen spoke of his home, the city; Peggy of hers, the west-end;—and a few mistakes and cross-readings ensued, especially on Peggy's part, who took Oxford Street for Cheapside, and Westminster Abbey for St. Paul's. But all passed under the general denomination of *Town*.—"There is a river in *London*, and also, moreover, there is a river in *Westminster*, and there is salmons in both." And Peggy talked, and listened, and smiled; and Stephen went home and wrote a sonnet to "his mistress's eye-brow."

The next day (Sunday) they met again after church, and took a walk together in the evening, in the course of which they discovered another subject common to both, that subject which those that like it at all find so delightful—the Theatre. Stephen, certainly the most literary of hosiers' apprentices, was especially enthusiastic on the drama, had twice appeared at a private theatre, and entertained a strong desire to embrace the stage as a profession as soon as he was out of his time. Now Peggy had herself been at three plays, and talked of them with some discretion; knew Comedy from Opera, and Tragedy from Farce. But it was not a talker that Stephen required on his theme; a listener was what he wanted; and no one ever acted audience whilst he rehearsed the story of his two appearances in Romeo and Richard the Third, better than the little blue-eyed girl who hung on his arm so admiringly as they

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walked round Aberleigh Green. Nothing, he said, could exceed the applause with which his debut in Romeo had been greeted by a large audience of city 'prentices, and shopwomen, troubled only by the astounding height of a bouncing Juliet, half as tall again as himself, who quite spoilt, as he observed, the proportions of the play. Again they made the tour of the Green, and Peggy had half promised to study the part of Juliet, when a difference arose out of this very subject which put an abrupt end to their courtship.

From his personal adventures Stephen wandered to a general critique on plays and actors, especially to a warm encomium on one great actor, who was as he said *his* model. Peggy (who had seen the tragedian in question in Othello) assented heartily to the panegyric, adding, "that it was a great pity so clever a man should be black." *

"Black!" ejaculated the astonished Stephen; "Black!!"

"Yes," answered Peggy, "black; a blackamoor, a negro."

"Blackamoor!! Negro!!!" re-echoed Stephen, more and more astounded. "Mr. ——— black! Are you dreaming? He's as fair as you are. What do you mean? What can you mean?"

"What I say," returned Peggy. "Did not I see him with my own eyes, and was not he as black as a chimney-sweeper? and did not his wife and every body talk of his complexion all through the play? You need not stand there, Mr. Stephen, holding up your hands and eyes, and looking as if you thought me a fool. I am not such a dunce as Sally North. I have been to London, and been to the play, and what I have seen I believe, for all your strange looks. He's as black as my master's great greyhound,"—continued Peggy, who had gradually talked herself into such a passion, that her cheeks, generally like a cabbage rose, were of the colour of a red cabbage—"as black as your hat."

Stephen on his part was for the first time in his life dumbfounded; first at the singular mixture of ignorance and simplicity implied in the assertion and the reasons brought to support it; secondly at the impudence of the little country damsel, who did not know Westminster Abbey from St. Paul's, and yet ventured to impugn his authority on such a point. "Let me tell you—" he began, when a little recovered from his consternation, "Let me tell you, child—."

"Child!" interrupted Peggy, touched on the very point of dignity! "child yourself! It is well known that I am sixteen all but eight months, and as for you, you'll look like a boy all the days of your life. You play Tragedy! Why you're hardly tall enough for Punch. Child indeed!

* This singular mistake did actually happen to a country girl of my acquaintance. I do not venture to put the actor's name,—although surely it was a compliment in its way not unlike that which Partridge paid to Garrick.

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And I almost sixteen! Never come near me again, Mr. Long, I have nothing to say to you—" and off marched Peggy; and poor Stephen, twice rejected in three days, would certainly have hanged himself in Sally North's scarlet garters, had he not had the lucky resource of tender poesy, that admirable vent-peg of disappointed love. He went back to Town, and wrote an elegy, and we have heard no more of him since.

So much for our villagers. With regard to my own small territory, it has lost one of its prime ornaments; my beautiful greyhound Mayflower is dead. Old age and the cold weather were too much for her. Poor pretty May! She lies under a rose-tree in a place she liked well. And my garden, "that bright bit of colour," as you call it, and which in the summer so well deserves the name; my garden is much like a small field newly harrowed, except that a grove of sticks seems to indicate the site of bulbs and perennials and other under-ground treasures. Matters are mending though. Two mild days have brought up a few green buds just peeping above the earth, and the borders begin to show symptoms of floweriness. The snowdrop, the crocus, the hepatica, and the aconite are already in blossom, (to think of being able to count the flowers in my garden!) and the Mezereon and the Pyrus Japonica will be out to-morrow. Things are certainly mending. My greenhouse looks really spring-like, and the robin which has inhabited that warm shelter during the whole winter, making no further excursion than to the honeysuckle opposite and back again, has ventured to the great pear-tree, and has got a companion, the rogue! I should not wonder if he built him a nest, and only visited us when he wanted bread crumbs.

The greenhouse does really give token of spring. You do not know my greenhouse, dear Mary, but you must come and see it. You have promised; have you not? At all events you must come. It is the simplest thing that ever was, and the prettiest—an excavation in a barn with glass in front looking on my nosegay of a garden, and serving, like Cowper's, the double purpose of a shelter for the geraniums in winter, and a summer parlour for ourselves. When they go out, we go in. Last year, which was generally so mild, a short sharp frost took us by surprise, and killed all my plants; but this severe winter we were prepared, and have saved them—and you must come to see them—and to see us—and then we shall like the greenhouse better still.

Ever yours,

&c. &c. &c.

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LOST AND WON.

"NAY, but my dear Letty—"

"Don't dear Letty me, Mr. Paul Holton! Have not the East-Woodhay Eleven beaten the Hazelby Eleven for the first time in the memory of man? and is it not entirely your fault? Answer me that, sir! Did not you insist on taking James White's place, when he got that little knock on the leg with the ball last night, though James, poor fellow, maintained to the last that he could play better with one leg than you with two? Did not you insist on taking poor James's place? and did you get a single notch in either innings? And did you not miss three catches—three fair catches—Mr. Paul Holton? Might not you twice have caught out John Brown, who, as all the world knows, hits up? And did not a ball from the edge of Tom Taylor's bat come into your hands, absolutely into your hands, and did not you let her go? And did not Tom Taylor after that get forty-five runs in the same innings, and thereby win the game? That a man should pretend to play at cricket, and not be able to hold the ball when he has her in his hands! Oh, if I had been there!"

"You!—Why Letty"—

"Don't Letty me, sir!—Don't talk to me!—I am going home!"

"With all my heart, Miss Letitia Dale! I have the honour, madam, to wish you a good evening." And each turned away at a smart pace, and the one went westward and the other eastward-ho.

This unlover-like parting occurred on Hazelby Down one fine afternoon in the Whitsun-week, between a couple whom all Hazelby, and Aberleigh to boot, had, for at least a month before, set down as lovers—Letty Dale, the pretty daughter

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of the jolly old tanner, and Paul Holton, a rich young yeoman, on a visit in the place. Letty's angry speech will sufficiently explain their mutual provocation, although, to enter fully into her feelings, one must be born in a cricketing parish, and sprung of a cricketing family, and be accustomed to rest that very uncertain and arbitrary standard, the point of honour, on beating our rivals and next neighbours in the annual match—for juxta-position is a great sharpener of rivalry, as Dr. Johnson knew, when, to please the inhabitants of Plymouth, he abused the good folks who lived at Dock; moreover, one must be also a quick, zealous, ardent, hot-headed, warm-hearted girl like Letty, a beauty and an heiress, quite unused to disappointment, and not a little in love, and then we shall not wonder, in the first place, that she should be unreasonably angry, or, in the next, that before she had walked half a mile her anger vanished, and was succeeded by tender relentings and earnest wishes for a full and perfect reconciliation. "He 'll be sure to call to-morrow morning," thought Letty to herself: "He said he would, before this unlucky cricket-playing. He told me that he had something to say, something particular. I wonder what it can be!" thought poor Letty. "To be sure, he never has said any thing about liking me—but still—and then aunt Judith, and Fanny Wright, and all the neighbours say——However, I shall know to-morrow." And home she tripped to the pleasant house by the tan-yard, as happy as if the East-Woodhay men had not beaten the men of Hazelby. "I shall not see him before to-morrow, though," repeated Letty to herself, and immediately repaired to her pretty flower-garden, the little gate of which opened on a path leading from the Down to the street—a path that, for obvious reasons, Paul was wont to prefer—and began tying up her carnations in the dusk of the evening, and watering her geraniums by the light of the moon, until it was so late that she was fain to return, disappointed, to the house, repeating to herself, "I shall certainly see him to-morrow."

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Far different were the feelings of the chidden swain. Well-a-day for the age of chivalry! the happy times of knights and paladins, when a lecture from a lady's rosy lip, or a buffet from her lily hand, would have been received as humbly and as thankfully as the Benedicite from a mitred abbot, or the accolade from a king's sword! Alas for the days of chivalry! They are gone, and I fear me for ever. For certain our present hero was not born to revive them.

Paul Holton was a well-looking and well-educated young farmer, just returned from the north, whither he had been sent for agricultural improvement, and now on the look-out for a farm and a wife, both of which he thought he had found at Hazelby, where he had come on the double errand of visiting some distant relations, and letting two or three small houses recently fallen into his possession. As owner of these houses, all situate in the town, he had claimed a right to join the Hazelby Eleven, mainly induced to avail himself of the privilege by the hope of winning favour in the eyes of the ungrateful fair one, whose animated character, as well as her sparkling beauty, had delighted his fancy, and apparently won his heart, until her rude attack on his play armed all the vanity of man against her attractions. Love is more intimately connected with self-love than people are willing to imagine; and Paul Holton's had been thoroughly mortified. Besides, if his fair mistress's character were somewhat too impetuous, his was greatly over-firm. So he said to himself—"The girl is a pretty girl, but far too much of a shrew for my taming. I am no Petruchio to master this Catherine. 'I come to wive it happily in Padua;' and let her father be as rich as he may, I'll none of her." And, mistaking anger for indifference—no uncommon delusion in a love-quarrel—off he set within the hour, thinking so very much of punishing the saucy beauty, that he entirely forgot the possibility of some of the pains falling to his own share.

The first tidings that Letty heard the next morning were

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that Mr. Paul Holton had departed over-night, having authorized his cousin to let his houses, and to decline the large farm, for which he was in treaty; the next intelligence informed her that he was settled in Sussex; and then his relation left Hazelby—and poor Letty heard no more. Poor Letty! Even in a common parting for a common journey, she who stays behind is the object of pity: how much more so when he who goes—goes never to return, and carries with him the fond affection, the treasured hopes, of a young unpractised heart,

> "And gentle wishes long subdued—
> Subdued and cherish'd long!"

Poor, poor Letty!

Three years passed away, and brought much of change to our country-maiden and to her fortunes. Her father, the jolly old tanner, a kind, frank, thoughtless man, as the cognomen would almost imply, one who did not think that there were such things as wickedness and ingratitude under the sun, became bound for a friend to a large amount; the friend proved a villain, and the jolly tanner was ruined. He and his daughter now lived in a small cottage near their former house; and at the point of time at which I have chosen to resume my story, the old man was endeavouring to persuade Letty, who had never attended a cricket-match since the one which she had so much cause to remember, to accompany him the next day (Whit-Tuesday) to see the Hazelby Eleven again encounter their ancient antagonists, the men of East-Woodhay.

"Pray come, Letty," said the fond father; "I can't go without you; I have no pleasure any where without my Letty; and I want to see this match, for Isaac Hunt can't play on account of the death of his mother, and they tell me that the East-Woodhay men have consented to our taking in another mate who practises the new Sussex bowling—I want to see that new-fangled mode. Do come, Letty!" And with a smothered sigh at the mention of Sussex, Letty consented.

Now old John Dale was not quite ingenuous with his pretty daughter. He did not tell her what he very well knew himself, that the bowler in question was no other than their sometime friend, Paul Holton, whom the business of letting his houses, or some other cause, not, perhaps, clearly defined even to himself, had brought to Hazelby on the eve of the match, and whose new method of bowling (in spite of his former mischances) the Hazelby Eleven were willing to try; the more so as they suspected, what, indeed, actually occurred, that the East-Woodhayites, who would have resisted the innovation of the Sussex system of delivering the ball in the hands of any one else, would have no objection to let Paul Holton, whose bad playing was a standing joke amongst them, do his best or his worst in any way.

Not a word of this did John Dale say to Letty; so that she was quite taken by surprise, when, having placed her father, now very infirm, in a comfortable chair, she sat down by his side on a little hillock of turf, and saw her recreant lover standing amongst a group of cricketers very near, and evidently gazing on her—just as he used to gaze three years before.

Perhaps Letty had never looked so pretty in her life as at that moment. She was simply drest, as became her fallen fortunes. Her complexion was still coloured, like the apple-blossom, with vivid red and white, but there was more of sensibility, more of the heart in its quivering mutability, its alternation of paleness and blushes; the blue eyes were still as bright, but they were oftener cast down; the smile was still as splendid, but far more rare; the girlish gaiety was gone, but it was replaced by womanly sweetness;—sweetness and modesty formed now the chief expression of that lovely face, lovelier, far lovelier, than ever. So apparently thought Paul Holton, for he gazed and gazed with his whole soul in his eyes, in complete oblivion of cricket and cricketer, and the whole world. At last he recollected himself, blushed and

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bowed, and advanced a few steps, as if to address her; but timid and irresolute, he turned away without speaking, joined the party who had now assembled round the wickets, the umpires called "Play!" and the game began.

East-Woodhay gained the toss and went in, and all eyes were fixed on the Sussex bowler. The ball was placed in his hands; and instantly the wicket was down, and the striker out—no other than Tom Taylor, the boast of his parish, and the best batsman in the county. "Accident, mere accident!" of course, cried East-Woodhay; but another, and another followed: few could stand against the fatal bowling, and none could get notches.—A panic seized the whole side. And then, as losers will, they began to exclaim against the system, called it a toss, a throw, a trick; any thing but bowling, any thing but cricket; railed at it as destroying the grace of the attitude, and the balance of the game; protested against being considered as beaten by such jugglery, and, finally, appealed to the umpires as to the fairness of the play. The umpires, men of conscience, and old cricketers, hummed and hawed, and see-sawed; quoted contending precedents and jostling authorities; looked grave and wise, whilst even their little sticks of office seemed vibrating in puzzled importance. Never were judges more sorely perplexed. At last they did as the sages of the bench often do in such cases—reserved the point of law, and desired them to "play out the play." Accordingly the match was resumed; only twenty-seven notches being gained by the East-Woodhayians in their first innings, and they entirely from the balls of the old Hazelby bowler, James White.

During the quarter of an hour's pause which the laws allow, the victorious man of Sussex went up to John Dale, who had watched him with a strange mixture of feeling, delighted to hear the stumps rattle, and to see opponent after opponent throw down his bat and walk off, and yet much annoyed at the new method by which the object was achieved. "We

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should not have called this cricket in my day," said he, "and yet it knocks down the wickets gloriously, too." Letty, on her part, had watched the game with unmingled interest and admiration: "He knew how much I liked to see a good cricketer," thought she; yet still, when that identical good cricketer approached, she was seized with such a fit of shyness—call it modesty—that she left her seat and joined a group of young women at some distance.

Paul looked earnestly after her, but remained standing by her father, inquiring with affectionate interest after his health, and talking over the game and the bowling. At length he said, "I hope that I have not driven away Miss Letitia."

"Call her Letty, Mr. Holton," interrupted the old man; "plain Letty. We are poor folks now, and have no right to any other title than our own proper names, old John Dale and his daughter Letty. A good daughter she has been to me," continued the fond father; "for when debts and losses took all that we had—for we paid to the uttermost farthing, Mr. Paul Holton, we owe no man a shilling!—when all my earnings and savings were gone, and the house over our head—the house I was born in, the house she was born in—I loved it the better for that!—taken away from us, then she gave up the few hundreds she was entitled to in right of her blessed mother to purchase an annuity for the old man, whose trust in a villain had brought her to want."

"God bless her!" interrupted Paul Holton.

"Ay, and God will bless her," returned the old man solemnly—"God will bless the dutiful child, who despoiled herself of all to support her old father!"

"Blessings on her dear generous heart!" again ejaculated Paul; "and I was away and knew nothing of this!"

"I knew nothing of it myself until the deed was completed," rejoined John Dale. "She was just of age, and the annuity was purchased and the money paid before she told me; and a cruel kindness it was to strip herself for my sake;

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it almost broke my heart when I heard the story. But even that was nothing," continued the good tanner, warming with his subject, "compared with her conduct since. If you could but see how she keeps the house, and how she waits upon me; her handiness, her cheerfulness, and all her pretty ways and contrivances to make me forget old times and old places. Poor thing! she must miss her neat parlour and the flower-garden she was so fond of, as much as I do my tan-yard and the great hall; but she never seems to think of them, and never has spoken a hasty word since our misfortunes, for all you know, poor thing! she used to be a little quick-tempered!"

"And I knew nothing of this!" repeated Paul Holton, as, two or three of their best wickets being down, the Hazelby players summoned him to go in. "I knew nothing of all this!"

Again all eyes were fixed on the Sussex cricketer, and at first he seemed likely to verify the predictions and confirm the hopes of the most malicious of his adversaries, by batting as badly as he had bowled well. He had not caught sight of the ball; his hits were weak, his defence insecure, and his mates began to tremble and his opponents to crow. Every hit seemed likely to be the last; he missed a leg ball of Ned Smith's; was all but caught out by Sam Newton; and East-Woodhay triumphed, and Hazelby sat quaking; when a sudden glimpse of Letty, watching him with manifest anxiety, recalled her champion's wandering thoughts. Gathering himself up, he stood before the wicket another man; knocked the ball hither and thither, to the turnpike, the coppice, the pond; got three, four, five at a hit; baffled the slow bowler James Smith, and the fast bowler Tom Taylor; got fifty-five notches off his own bat; stood out all the rest of his side; and so handled the adverse party when they went in, that the match was won at a single innings, with six-and-thirty runs to spare.

Whilst his mates were discussing their victory, Paul Hol-

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ton again approached the father and daughter, and this time she did not run away: "Letty, dear Letty," said he; "three years ago I lost the cricket-match, and you were angry, and I was a fool. But Letty, dear Letty, this match is won! and if you could but know how deeply I have repented, how earnestly I have longed for this day! The world has gone well with me, Letty, for these three long years. I have wanted nothing but the treasure which I myself threw away, and now, if you would but let your father be my father, and my home your home!—if you would but forgive me, Letty!"

Letty's answer is not upon record: but it is certain that Paul Holton walked home from the cricket-ground that evening with old John Dale hanging on one arm, and John Dale's pretty daughter on the other; and that a month after the bells of Hazelby church were ringing merrily in honour of one of the fairest and luckiest matches that ever cricketer lost and won.

CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE.

AMY LLOYD.

One fine sunshiny March morning, a lady, driving herself in a pony-carriage through Aberleigh lane, stopped beside a steep bank to look at a little girl and her dog in the adjoining field. The hedge had been closely cut, except where a tuft of hazel with its long tassels hung over some broom in full flower, and a straggling bush of the white-blossomed sloe was mixed with some branches of palms, from which the bees were already gathering honey. The little girl was almost as busy as the bees: she was gathering violets, white violets and blue, with which the sunny bank was covered; and her little dog was barking at a flock of sheep feeding in that part of the

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field, for it was a turnip field that was hurdled off for their use. The dog was a small French spaniel, one of the prettiest ever seen, with long curly hair, snow white, except that the ears and three or four spots on the body were yellow; large feathered feet, and bright black eyes: just the sort of dog of which fine ladies love to make pets.

It was curious to see this beautiful little creature, driving before it a great flock of sheep, ewes, lambs, and all—for sheep are sad cowards! And then, when driven to the hurdles, the sheep, cowards though they were, were forced to turn about; how they would take courage at sight of their enemy, advancing a step or two and pretending to look brave; then it was diverting to see how the little spaniel, frightened itself, would draw back barking towards its mistress, almost as sad a coward as the sheep. The lady sat watching their proceedings with great amusement, and at last addressed the little girl, a nice lass of ten years old in deep mourning.

"Whose pretty little dog is that, my dear!" asked the lady.

"Mine, madam," was the answer.

"And where did you get it? The breed is not common."

"It belonged to poor mamma. Poor papa brought it from France." And the look and the tone told at once that poor Amy was an orphan.

"And you and the pretty dog—what's its name?" said the lady, interrupting herself.

"Flossy, ma'am—dear Flossy!" And Amy stooped to stroke the curly, silky, glossy coat which had probably gained Flossy his appellation; and Flossy in return jumped on his young mistress, and danced about her with tenfold glee.

"You and Flossy live hereabout?" inquired the lady.

"Close by, ma'am; at Court farm, with my uncle and aunt Lloyd."

"And you love Flossy?" resumed the lady;—"You would not like to part with him?"

"Part with Floss!" cried Amy. "Part with my own

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Flossy!"—and she flung down her violets, and caught her faithful pet in her arms, as if fearful of its being snatched away; and Floss, as if partaking of the fear, nestled up to his young mistress, and pressed his head against her cheek.

"Do not be alarmed, my dear," replied the lady, preparing to drive on; "I am not going to steal your favourite, but I would give five guineas for a dog like him; and if ever you meet with such a one, you have only to send it to Lumley castle. I am Lady Lumley," added she. "Good morning, love! Farewell, Flossy!" And, with a kind nod, the lady and the pony-chaise passed rapidly by; and Amy and Flossy returned to Court farm.

Amy was an orphan, and had only lately come to live with her good uncle and aunt Lloyd, rough honest country people; and being a shy meek-spirited child, who had just lost most affectionate parents, and had been used to soft voices and gentle manners, was so frightened at the loud speech of the farmer and the blunt ways of his wife, that she ran away from them as often as she could, and felt as forlorn and desolate as any little girl can do who has early learnt the blessed lesson of reliance on the Father of all. Her chief comfort at Court farm was to pet Flossy and to talk to old Dame Clewer, the charwoman, who had been her own mother's nurse.

Dame Clewer had known better days; but having married late in life, and been soon left a widow, she had toiled early and late to bring up an only son; and all her little earnings had gone to apprentice him to a carpenter, and keep him decently clothed; and he, although rather lively and thoughtless, was a dutiful and grateful son, and being now just out of his time, had gone to the next town to try to get work, and hoped to repay his good mother all her care and kindness by supporting her out of his earnings. He had told his mother so when setting off the week before, and she had repeated it with tears in her eyes to Amy—tears of joy; and Amy, on her return to the house, went immediately in search of her old friend, whom

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she knew to be washing there, partly to hear over again the story of Thomas Clewer's goodness, partly to tell her own adventure with Lady Lumley.

In the drying yard, as she expected, Amy found Dame Clewer; not however, as she expected, smiling and busy, and delighted to see Miss Amy, but sitting on the ground by the side of the clothes-basket, her head buried in her hands, and sobbing as if her heart would break. "What could be the matter? Why did she cry so?" asked Amy. And Dame Clewer, unable to resist the kind interest evinced by the affectionate child, told her briefly the cause of her distress.—"Thomas had enlisted!" How few words may convey a great sorrow!—"Thomas was gone for a soldier!"—And the poor mother flung herself at her length on the ground, and gasped and sobbed as though she would never speak again.

"Gone for a soldier!" exclaimed Amy—"Left you! Oh, he never can be so cruel, so wicked! He'll come back, dear nurse!" (for Amy always called Dame Clewer nurse, as her mother had been used to do.) "He'll be sure to come back; Thomas is such a good son, with all his wildness. He'll come back—I know he will."

"He can't!" replied poor nurse, trying to rouse herself from her misery. "He can't come, how much so ever he may wish it; they'll not let him. Nothing can get him off but money, and I have none to give." And again the mother's tears choked her words. "My poor boy must go!"

"Money?" said Amy, "I have half a crown, that godmamma gave me, and two shillings and three sixpences; I'll go and fetch them in a moment."

"Blessings on your dear heart!" sobbed Dame Clewer; "your little money would be of no use. The soldier who came to tell me, offered to get him off for five pounds? but where am I to get five pounds! All my goods and all my clothes would not raise near such a sum: and even if any body was willing to lend money to a poor old creature like me, how

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should I ever be able to pay it? No? Thomas must go—go to the East Indies, as the soldier said, to be killed by the sword or to die of the fever?—I shall never see his dear face again! Never!" And turning resolutely from the pitying child, she bent over the clothes in the basket, trying to unfold them with her trembling hands and to hang them out to dry; but, unable in her agony to separate the wet linen, she burst into a passion of tears, and stood leaning against the clothes' line, which quivered and vibrated at every sob, as if sensible of the poor mother's misery.

Amy, on her part, sat on the steps leading to the house, watching her in silent pity. "Oh, if mamma were alive!" thought the little girl—"or papa! or if I dared ask aunt Lloyd! or if I had the money of my own; or any thing that would fetch the money!" And just as she was thinking this very thought, Floss, wondering to see his little mistress so still and sad, crept up to her, and put his paw in her lap and whined. "Dear Floss!" said Amy unconsciously, and then suddenly remembering what Lady Lumley had said to her, she took the dog up in her arms, and coloured like scarlet, from a mingled emotion of pleasure and pain, for Flossy had been her own mamma's dog, and Amy loved him dearly. For full five minutes she sat hugging Flossy and kissing his sleek shining head, whilst the faithful creature licked her cheeks and her hands, and nestled up to her bosom, and strove all he could to prove his gratitude, and return her caresses. For full five minutes she sat without speaking; at last she went to Dame Clewer, and gave the dog into her arms.

"Lady Lumley offered me five guineas for Flossy this morning," said she; "take him, dear nurse, and take the money; but beg her to be kind to him," continued poor Amy, no longer able to restrain her tears—"beg her to be very kind to my Floss!" And, with a heart too full even to listen to the thanks and blessings which the happy mother was showering upon her head, the little girl turned away.

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But did Lady Lumley buy Flossy? And was Thomas Clewer discharged? Yes, Thomas was discharged, for Sir John Lumley spoke to his colonel; and he returned to his home and his fond mother, quite cured of his wildness and his fancy for being a soldier. But Lady Lumley did not buy Floss, because, as she said, however she might like him, she never could bear to deprive so good a girl as Amy of any thing that gave her pleasure. She would not buy Floss, but she continued to take great notice both of him and his little mistress, had them often at the castle, always made Amy a Christmas present, and talks of taking her for her own maid when she grows up.

THE MAGPIES.

"COME along girls! Helen! Caroline! I say, don't stand jabbering there upon the stairs, but come down this instant, or Dash and I will be off without you."

This elegant speech was shouted from the bottom of the great staircase at Dinely Hall, by young George Dinely, an Etonian of eleven years old, just come home for the holidays, to his two younger sisters, who stood disputing very ar-

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dently in French at the top. The cause of contention was, to say the truth, no greater an object than the colour of a work-bag, which they were about to make for their mamma: slate lined with pink being the choice of Miss Caroline, whilst Miss Helen preferred drab with a blue lining.

"Don't stand there quarrelling about the colour of your trumpery," added George, "but come along!"

Now George would have scorned to know a syllable of any language except Latin and Greek, but neither of the young ladies being Frenchwomen enough to construe the appellation of the leading article, the words "drab" and "slate," which came forth in native English pretty frequently, as well as the silk dangling in their hands, had enlightened him as to the matter in dispute.

George was a true schoolboy, rough and kind; affecting perhaps more roughness than naturally belonged to him, from a mistaken notion that it made him look bold, and English, and manly. There cannot be a greater mistake, since the boldest man is commonly the mildest, thus realizing in every way the expression of Shakspeare, which has been the subject of a somewhat unnecessary commentary, "He's gentle and not fearful." For the rest, our hero loved his sisters, which was very right; and loved to tease them, which was very wrong; and now he and his dog Dash, both wild with spirits and with happiness, were waiting most impatiently to go down to the village on a visit to old Nurse Simmons and her magpie.

Nurse Simmons was a very good and very cross old woman, who, after ruling in the nursery of Dinely Hall for two generations, scolding and spoiling Sir Edward and his brothers, and performing thirty years afterwards the same good office for Master George and his sisters, had lately abdicated her throne on the arrival of a French governess, and was now comfortably settled at a cottage of her own in the village street.

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George Dinely and Dash had already that morning visited George's own pony, and his father's brood mares, the garden, the stables, the pheasantry, the greenhouse, and the farm-yard; had seen a brood of curious bantams, two litters of pigs, and a family of greyhound puppies, and had few friends, old or new, left to visit except Nurse Simmons, her cottage and her magpie, a bird of such accomplishments, that his sisters had even made it the subject of a letter to Eton. The magpie might perhaps claim an equal share with his mistress in George's impatience, and Dash, always eager to get out of doors, seemed nearly as fidgetty as his young master.

Dash was as beautiful a dog as one should see in a summer's day; one of the large old English spaniels, which are now so rare, with a superb head like those you see in Spanish pictures, and such ears! they more than met over his pretty spotted nose, and when he lapped his milk dipped into the pan at least two inches. His hair was long and shiny and wavy, not curly, partly of a rich dark liver colour, partly of a silvery white, and beautifully feathered about the legs and thighs. Every body used to wonder that Dash, who apparently ate so little, should be in such good case; but the marvel was by no means so great as it seemed, for his being George's peculiar pet and property did not hinder his being the universal favourite of the whole house, from the drawing-room to the kitchen. Not a creature could resist Dash's silent supplications at meal times, when he sat upon his haunches looking amiable, with his large ears brought into their most becoming position, his head a little on one side, and his beautiful eyes fixed on your face, with as near an approach to speech as ever eyes made in the world. From Sir Edward and her Ladyship down to the stable-boy and the kitchen-maid, no inhabitant of Dinely Hall could resist Dash! So that being a dog of most apprehensive sagacity with regard to the hours appropriated to the several refections of the family, he usually contrived, between the dining parlour, the school-room,

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and the servants' hall, to partake of three breakfasts and as many dinners every day, to say nothing of an occasional snap at luncheon or supper-time. No wonder that Dash was in high condition. His good plight, however, had by no means impaired his activity. On the contrary, he was extremely lively as well as intelligent, and had a sort of circular motion, a way of flinging himself quite round on his hind feet, something after the fashion in which the French dancers twirl themselves round on one leg, which not only showed unusual agility in a dog of his size, but gave token of the same spirit and animation which sparkled in his bright hazel eye. Any thing of eagerness or impatience was sure to excite this motion, and George Dinely gravely assured his sisters, when they at length joined him in the hall, that Dash had flung himself round six and twenty times whilst waiting the conclusion of their quarrel.

Getting out into the lawn and the open air, did not tend to diminish Dash's glee or his capers, and the young party walked merrily on; George telling of school pranks and school misfortunes—the having lost or spoilt four hats since Easter seemed rather to belong to the first class of adventures than the second,—his sisters listening dutifully and wonderingly; and Dash following his own devices, now turning up a mouse's nest from a water furrow in the park,—now springing a covey of young partridges in a corn-field,—now plunging his whole hairy person in the brook,—and now splashing Miss Helen from head to foot by ungallantly jumping over her whilst crossing a stile, being thereunto prompted by a whistle from his young master, who had, with equal want of gallantry, leapt the stile first himself, and left his sisters to get over as they could; until at last the whole party, having passed the stile, and crossed the bridge, and turned the church-yard corner, found themselves in the shady recesses of the Vicarage lane, and in full view of the vine-covered cottage of Nurse Simmons.

As they advanced they heard a prodigious chattering and jabbering, and soon got near enough to ascertain that the

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sound proceeded mainly from one of the parties they were come to visit—Nurse Simmons's magpie. He was perched in the middle of the road, defending a long dirty bare bone of mutton, doubtless his property, on one end of which he stood, whilst the other extremity was occupied by a wild bird of the same species, who, between pecking at the bone, and fighting, and scolding, found full employment. The wild magpie was a beautiful creature, as wild magpies are, of a snowy white and a fine blue black, perfect in shape and plumage, and so superior in appearance to the tame bird, ragged, draggled, and dirty, that they hardly seemed of the same kind. Both were chattering away most furiously; the one in his natural and unintelligible gibberish, the other partly in his native tongue, and partly in that, for his skill in which he was so eminent,—thus turning his accomplishments to an unexpected account, and larding his own lean speech with divers foreign garnishes, such as "What's o'clock?" and "How do you do?" and "Very well I thank you," and "Poor pretty Mag!" and "Mag's a good bird,"—all delivered in the most vehement accent, and all doubtless understood by the unlearned adversary as terms of reproach.

"What can those two magpies be quarrelling about?" said Caroline, as soon as she could speak for laughing; for on the children's approach the birds had abandoned the mutton bone, which had been quietly borne away by Dash, who in spite of his usual sumptuous fare had no objection to such a windfall, and was lying in great state on a mossy bank, discussing and enjoying the stolen morsel.

"What a fury they are in! I wish I knew what they were saying," pursued Caroline, as the squabble grew every moment more angry and less intelligible.

"They are talking nonsense, doubtless, as people commonly do when they quarrel," quoth George, "and act wisely to clothe it in a foreign tongue; perhaps they may be disputing about colours."

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"What an odd noise it is!" continued Caroline, by no means disposed to acknowledge her brother's compliment; "I never heard any thing like it."

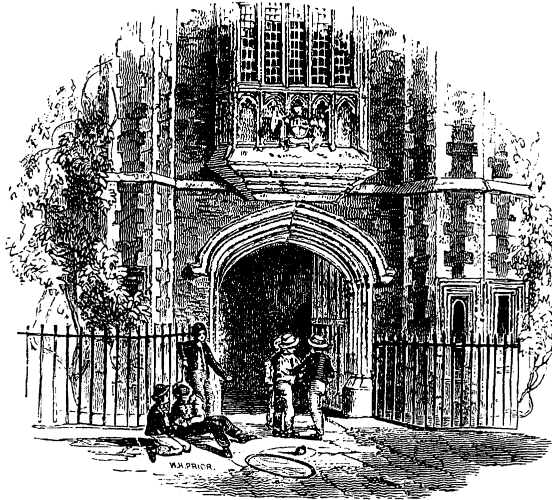
"I have," said George, drily.

"I wonder whether they comprehend each other!" ejaculated Miss Helen, following her sister's example, and taking no notice of the provoking George; "they really do seem to understand."

"As well as other magpies," observed the young gentleman, "why should they not?"

"But what strange gibberish!" added poor Helen.

"Gibberish, Miss Helen! Don't you hear that the birds are sputtering magpie French, sprinkled with a little magpie English? I was just going to ask you to explain it to me," replied the unmerciful George. "It is quite a parody upon



GATE, ETON COLLEGE.

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your work-bag squabble," pursued their tormentor; "only that the birds are the wiser, for I see they are parting,—the wild one flying away, the tame gentleman hopping towards us. Quite the scene of the work-bag over again," continued George, "only with less noise, and much shortened—an abridged and corrected edition! Really, young ladies, the magpies have the best of it," said the Etonian, and off he stalked into Nurse Simmons's cottage.

THE ROBINS.

"WHAT have you got in your hat, Edward?" said Arthur Maynard to his cousin Edward Stanhope, as they met one day in our village street, near which they both resided; "what can you have there? a bird's nest?"

"Oh, I hope not!" exclaimed Julia Maynard, who was walking with her brother and a younger sister, "taking birds' nests is cruel."

"Cruel or not, Miss Julia," replied Edward, "a birds' nest it is. Look, Arthur," continued he, displaying a nest full of poor little unfledged creatures, opening four great mouths as wide as they could gape; "look, they are robins."

"Robins! robin redbreasts! the household bird! the friend of man!" cried Arthur; "take a robin's nest! oh, fie, fie!"

"The robin redbreast," said little Sophy Maynard, "that when the poor Children in the Wood were starved to death, covered them over with leaves. Did you never hear old Nurse Andrews repeat the old ballad? I can almost say it myself:—

> 'No burial this pretty pair
> Of any man receives,
> Till Robin Redbreast painfully
> Did cover them with leaves,'"—

shouted Sophy: "you that pretend to be so fond of poetry, to take a robin's nest."

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"Poetry!" rejoined Edward, contemptuously, "a penny ballad! an old woman's song! call that poetry!"

"I like to hear it, though," persisted little Sophy; "I had rather hear Nurse Andrews repeat the Children in the Wood, than any thing; call it what names you like."

"And it was but the other day," said Julia, "that papa made me learn some verses just to the same effect out of Mr. Lamb's Specimens. Did you ever hear them?

'Call to the robin redbreast and the wren,
Since o'er shady groves they hover,
And with flowers and leaves do cover
The friendless bodies of unburied men.'

Now I am quite sure that these lines are poetry; and, at all events, every body holds the robin sacred for his social qualities, he is so tame, so confiding, so familiar; no one would ever think of taking his nest, even if birds'-nesting were not the cruelest thing in the world," continued Julia, returning to her first exclamation, "Every body cherishes the robin."

"So do I," replied her incorrigible cousin; "I am so fond of the Robin and his note that I mean to bring up all four of these young ones, and tame them, and make friends of them."

"Put back the nest, and I will teach you a better way," said Arthur; "for we mean to tame some robins ourselves this summer."

"Put back the nest indeed!" rejoined Edward; "I must make haste home, and get the butler to give me a cage, and Fanny to help me to feed them. Put back the nest indeed!" and off ran the naughty taker of birds' nests, vainly pursued by little Sophy's chidings, by Julia's persuasions, by Arthur's remonstrances, and by the united predictions of all three that he would never rear the unfortunate younglings.

Very true were these predictions. One by one, in spite of all the care of Edward and his sister Fanny, who crammed them twenty times a day with all sorts of food, proper or im-

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proper, bread, meat, eggs, herbs, and insects, with every mess, in short, that they had ever heard recommended for any bird; one by one the poor little shivering creatures, shivering although wrapt in lamb's-wool and swan's-down, pined, and dwindled, and died; and Fanny, a kind-hearted little girl, fretted and cried; and Edward, not less vexed, but too proud to cry, grumbled at his ill-luck, and declared that he would never trouble himself with birds again as long as he lived. "I wonder how Arthur has succeeded with his!" thought he to himself; "I think he and the girls talked of getting some —but of course they all died. I am sure no people could take more pains than Fanny and I. I'll never trouble myself with birds again."

About two months after this soliloquy, the young Stanhopes received an invitation to dine with their cousins, for it was Sophy's birthday, and the children had a half-holiday; and after dinner they were allowed to eat their cherries and strawberries in their own verandah, a place they were all very fond of. And a very pretty place this verandah was.

Fancy a deep shaded trellis running along one end of the house, covered with vines, passion-flowers, clematis, and jessamine, looking over gay flower-beds, the children's own flower-beds, to an arbour of honeysuckle, laburnum, and china-roses, which Arthur had made for Julia; clusters of green-house plants, their own pet geraniums, arranged round the pillars of the verandah; and the verandah itself furnished with their own tables and chairs, and littered with their toys and their small garden tools; as pretty an out-of-door play-room as heart could desire.

It was a fine sunny afternoon towards the end of June, and the young folks enjoyed the fruits and the flowers, and the sweet scent of the bean blossoms and the new-mown hay in the neighbouring fields, and were as happy as happy could be. At last, after the girls had pointed out their richest geraniums and largest heartsease, and they had been properly

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praised and admired, Arthur said, "I think it is time to show Edward our robins." And at the word, little Sophy began strewing bread crumbs at one end of the verandah as fast as her hands could go.

"Bobby! Bobby! pretty Bobby!" cried Sophy; and immediately the prettiest robin that ever was seen came flying out of the arbour towards her; not in a direct line, but zigzag as it were, stopping first at a rose tree, then swinging on the top of a lily, then perching on the branch of a campanula that bent under him—still coming nearer and nearer, and listening, and turning up his pretty head as Sophy continued to cry, "Bobby! Bobby!" and sometimes bowing his body, and jerking his tail in token of pleased acknowledgment, until at last he alighted on the ground, and began picking up the bread crumbs with which it was strewed. Whilst presently two or three young robins with their speckled breasts (for the red feathers do not appear until they are three or four months old) came fluttering about the verandah, flying in and out quite close to the children, hopping round them, and feeding at their very feet; not shy at all, not even cautious like the old birds, who had seen more of the world, and looked at the strangers with their bright piercing eyes rather mistrustfully, as if they knew that there were such things as little boys who take birds' nests, and little girls who keep birds in cages.

"Bobby! pretty Bobby!" continued Sophy, quite enchanted at the good conduct of her pets, and calling upon her cousins for their tribute of admiration. Fanny willingly expressed her delight; and Edward, looking somewhat foolish, wondered how they became so tame.

"We used to throw down the crumbs from breakfast and dinner in this place all the winter," said Julia; "the poor birds are so glad of them in the hard weather! And one particular robin used to come for them every day, and grew quite familiar; he would even wait here for us, and fly to meet us as soon as that quick eye of his spied a white frock turning the

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corner. So then we began to talk to him, and to feed him regularly."

"I always saved a great bit of my bread for Bobby," interrupted Sophy.

"And he grew as tame as you see; and when he had young ones, he brought them here with him," resumed her sister.

"You should have seen them the first day," said Sophy; "that was the prettiest sight. The little things did not know how to help themselves, so there they stood about, some on the geraniums and some on the rose trees, chirping, and opening their bills for the old ones to feed them; and the poor old birds flew about from one to the other with bread crumbs, not taking a morsel themselves. You cannot think how much the young ones ate! There was one great greedy fellow perched on my rake, who made his poor papa bring him seven mouthfuls before he was satisfied. And now they are so saucy! see how saucy they are!" continued the little girl, as one of the boldest came close to her, and caught a crumb which she was flinging to him before it reached the ground, "see how saucy! O pretty, pretty Bobbies! I do love them so."

"We all like the poor confiding creatures who pay us the compliment of trusting so entirely in our kindness and good faith, I believe," said Arthur, half laughing at her eagerness; "and after all, Edward," added he, as the two boys, bat in hand, marched off to cricket, "after all, you must confess that our method of taming robins is better than yours, and that one bird who comes to you at liberty, of his own free will, is worth a dozen kidnapped in the nest, luckless wretches, and mewed up in a cage."

Edward confessed that his cousin was right, and never took a bird's nest again.

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HARRY LEWINGTON.

"Beg, Frisk, beg! said little Harry Lewington, as he sat in state on an inverted basket at his grandmother's door, discussing with great satisfaction a huge porringer of bread and milk, whilst his sister Lucy, who had already despatched her breakfast, sat on the ground opposite to him, now twisting the long wreaths of the convolvulus-major into garlands—now throwing them away. "Beg, Frisk, beg!" repeated Harry, holding a bit of bread just out of the dog's reach; and the obedient Frisk squatted himself on his hind legs, and held up his fore paws, in patient supplication, until it pleased Master Harry to bestow upon him the tempting morsel.

The little boy and the little dog were great friends, notwithstanding that Harry, in the wantonness of power, would sometimes tease and tantalize his poor pet more than a good boy should have done. Frisk loved him dearly, much better than he did Lucy, although Lucy gave him every day part of her breakfast, without making him beg, and would tie pretty ribands round his neck, and pat and stroke his rough head for half an hour together. Harry was Frisk's prime favourite; perhaps because the little dog, being himself of a merry disposition, liked the boy's lively play better than the girl's gentle caresses; perhaps because he recollected that Harry was his earliest patron, and firmest friend, during a time of great trouble: quadrupeds of his species having a knack of remembering past kindness, which it would do the biped, called man, no harm to copy.

Poor Frisk had come as a stray dog to Aberleigh. If he could have told his own story, it would probably have been a very pitiful one, of distress and wanderings, of "hunger and foul weather," of kicks and cuffs, and all "the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes." Certain it is that he made his appearance at Mrs. Lewington's door in miserable

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plight, wet, dirty, and half-starved; that there he encountered Harry, who took an immediate fancy to him, and Mrs. Lewington, who drove him off with a broom; that a violent dispute ensued between the good dame and her grandson, Harry persisting in inviting him in, Mrs. Lewington in frightening him away; that at first it ended in Frisk's being established as a sort of out-door pensioner, subsisting on odds and ends, stray bones, and cold potatoes, surreptitiously obtained for him by his young protector, and sleeping in the identical basket which, turned topsy-turvy, afterwards served Harry for a seat; until at length Mrs. Lewington, who had withstood the incessant importunity of the patron, and the persevering humility of his client, was propitiated by Frisk's own doggish exploit in barking away a set of pilferers, who were making an attack on her great pear-tree, and so frightening the thieves, that they not only scampered off in all haste, but left behind them their implements of thievery, a ladder, two baskets, and a sack: the good dame being thus actually a gainer by the intended robbery, and so well satisfied with Frisk's conduct, that she not only admitted him into her house, but considered him as one of her most vigilant and valuable inmates, worth all the watchmen that ever sprung a rattle.

The new guard proved to be a four-footed person of singular accomplishments. He could fetch or carry, either by land or by water; would pick up her thimble or cotton, if his old mistress happened to drop them; carry Lucy's little pattens to school in case of a shower; or take Harry's dinner to the same place with unimpeachable honesty. Moreover he was so strong on his hind legs, walked upright so firmly and gracefully, cut so many capers, and had so good an ear for music, that the more sagacious amongst the neighbours suspected him of having been, at least, the principal performer in a company of dancing dogs, even if he were not the learned dog Munito himself. Frisk and his exploits were the wonder of Aberleigh, where he had now resided a twelve-

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month (for August was come round again) with honour and credit to himself, and perfect satisfaction to all parties.

"Beg, Frisk, beg!" said Harry, and gave him, after long waiting, the expected morsel; and Frisk was contented, but Harry was not. The little boy, though a good-humoured fellow in the main, had fits of naughtiness which were apt to last all day, and this promised to be one of his worst. It was a holiday moreover, when he had nothing to do but to be naughty, and in the afternoon his cousins Susan and William were to come and see him and Lucy, and the pears were to be gathered, and the children to have a treat; and Harry, in his impatience, thought the morning would never be over, and played such pranks by way of beguiling the time—buffeting Frisk for instance, burning his own fingers, cutting the curls off his sister's doll's flaxen wig, and finally breaking his grandmother's spectacles,—that before his visitors arrived, indeed almost immediately after dinner, he contrived to get sent to bed in disgrace.

Poor Harry! There he lay sprawling, kicking, and roaring, whilst Susan, and William, and Lucy, were happily busy about the fine mellow Windsor pears; William up the tree gathering and shaking, Lucy and Susan catching them in their pinafores, and picking them up from the ground; now piling the rich fruit into the great baskets that the thieves had left behind; and now, happy urchins, eating at discretion of the nicest and ripest; Frisk barking gaily amongst them as if he were eating Windsor pears too.

Poor Harry! He could hear all their glee and merriment through the open window as he lay in bed, and the storm of passion having subsided into a gentle rain of self-pity, there he lay weeping and disconsolate, a grievous sob bursting forth every now and then as he heard the loud peal of childish laughter, and thought how he should have laughed, and how happy he should have been, and wondered whether his grandmother would so far relent as to let him get up to supper, and

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whether Lucy would be so good-natured as to bring him a pear. "It will be very ill-natured if she does not," thought Harry, and the poor boy's tears burst out anew. All on a sudden he heard a little foot on the stair, pit-a-pat, and thought she was coming. Pit-a-pat came the foot, nearer and nearer, and at last a small head peeped, half-afraid, through the half-open door. But it was not Lucy's head; it was Frisk's—poor Frisk, whom Harry had been teasing all the morning, and who now came into the room wagging his tail with a great pear in his mouth, jumped on the bed, and laid it in the little boy's hand.

NOTE.—They who are accustomed to dogs whose sagacity has been improved by domestication and good society, will not be surprised at the foregoing anecdote. Cowper's story of the water-lily is quite a case in point; and a greyhound of my acquaintance, whose favourite playground was a large orchard, used regularly to bring the fallen apples to his mistress, was particularly anxious to go there after a windy night, and seemed to take singular pleasure in the amusement. This might be imitation; but an exploit of my own lamented and beautiful Mayflower can hardly be traced to such an origin. Poor May, in common with most pet dogs, generally cared little for the persons whose duty it was to feed and attend upon her; she seemed to know that it was their place, and received their services with calm and aristocratic civility, reserving all demonstration of affection for her friends of the parlour. One of her attendants, however, a lively, good-humoured boy called Tom, she honoured with a considerable share of her attention, liked his company, and, to the astonishment of the whole household, certainly liked him, a partiality which Tom returned with interest, combing and caressing her whenever opportunity offered. Master Tom was a celebrated player at marbles, and May was accustomed to stand at his side watching or seeming to watch the game. One

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afternoon she jumped over the half-hatch into the stable, evidently in search of her friend Tom—no Tom was there; raced round the garden—still in vain; peeped into the kitchen—Tom was as much to seek as ever: the maids, who saw that she had something in her mouth, and were amused by her earnest searching air, tried to detain her or to decoy her into the parlour, but without the slightest success. On she went from chaise-house to wood-house, from wood-house to coal-house, from coal-house to cart-house, until she caught a well-known sound from the knife-board, and, opening a door in the way, darted on the astonished Tom (whose fright at the apparition cost one of our best carving forks, which he broke in his surprise) and deposited in his hand a marble, which, as we afterwards found, she had picked up in the road, following up her present by a series of capers and gambols the most joyous and triumphant that can be imagined.

PRIDE SHALL HAVE A FALL.

" So you Aberleigh boys are about to play Sandleford," said George Leslie to Horace Lucas, " have you a good eleven?"

" Our players are pretty fair, I believe," replied Horace, " but the number is short. Both sides have agreed to take a mate or two from other parishes, and I rode over to ask your cousin Charles and yourself to join our Aberleigh party."

"Faith! you are in luck, my good friend," cried George Leslie, " you may look upon the game as won. Charles, to be sure, is no great hand; can't bowl; hits up; and a bad field—a slow awkward field. But I—Did you never see me play? And I am so improved this season! I ought to be improved, for I have seen such play, and such players! I am just returned from my aunt's, who lives within a mile of Bramshill—Sir John's, you know—and there were all the great men of the day, all the Lord's men: Mr. Ward; and

Mr. Budd—I 'm thought to stand at my wicket very much like Mr. Budd; Saunders, who is reckoned, take him all in all, the best player in England; Saunders; and Broadbridge the Sussex bowler—I don't patronize their system though, I stick to the old steady, scientific game; Lord Frederick; and Mr. Knight—he 's a fine figure of a man is Mr. Knight, the finest figure of any of them, and very great in the field; old Howard the bowler,—he 's my model; and, in short, almost every celebrated cricketer in England. I know that you Westminsters think that nobody can do any thing so well as yourselves; but as far as cricket goes—ask Charles, he 'll tell you that you are in luck to have me." And off the young gentleman strutted to pay his compliments to some ladies who were talking to his mother on the other side of the lawn; for this conversation took place on a fine day in July, under the heavy shadow of some tall elms, in Mrs. Leslie's beautiful grounds.

George's speech had been delivered in a high, solemn, vaunting tone, as grave as Don Quixote; but of the two who remained, Horace, a quick, arch, lively lad, laughed outright, and Charles, a mild, fair, delicate boy, could not help smiling.

"He gives himself a comfortable character, however," said Horace, "rather too good to be true; whilst of you he speaks modestly enough. Are you so bad, Charles? And is he such a paragon of cricketers? Does he bat like Mr. Budd, and field like Mr. Knight, and bowl like Howard?"

"Why, not exactly," was the reply; "but there 's more truth than you think for. He 's a good, but uncertain player; and I am a bad one, a very bad one; shy and timid and awkward; always feeling when the game is over that I could have done better; just as I have felt when a clever man, your father, for instance, has had the goodness to speak to me, how much better I ought to have talked. Somehow the power never comes at the right time, at either game; so that I may say, as some people say of cucumbers, that I like cricket, but that cricket does not like me."

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"Good or bad, my dear fellow, I'll take you," said Horace, "nervousness and all. It's a pity that you two cousins could not make over to one another some parcel of your several qualities; you would be much the happier for a dash of George's self-conceit, and he could spare enough to set up a whole regiment of dandies; whilst he would be all the better for your superfluous modesty. However, I'll take you both, right thankfully." And the arrangements were entered into forthwith. They were to meet on the ground on the ensuing morning to play the match; different engagements preventing the Leslies from practising with the Aberleigh side that evening, as Horace had wished and intended; for our friend Horace, ardent and keen in every thing, whether of sport or study, had set his heart on winning this match, and was very desirous of trying the powers of his new allies. Fifty times during the evening did he count over his own good players, and the good players of the other side, and gravely conclude, "It will all depend on the Leslies. How I wish to-morrow were come!" He said this so often that even his sister Emily, although the most indulgent person in the world, and very fond of her brother, grew so tired of hearing him that she could not help saying "I wish to-morrow were come too!"

And at last, as generally happens, whether we wish for it or not, to-morrow did come, as brilliant a to-morrow as ever was anticipated, even by a schoolboy in the holidays. The sun rose without a cloud; I speak from the best authority, for "scorning the scorner sleep" Horace was up before him: and the ball being twenty times weighed and the bats fifty times examined, he repaired, by half-past nine, to Sandleford Common, where the match was to be played, and the wickets pitched precisely at ten o'clock.

All parties were sufficiently punctual; and when the whole set had assembled, Horace found that, in spite of his calculations, a mistake had arisen in the amount of his forces; that reckoning himself there were ten Aberleigh boys on the

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ground, besides the two foreign allies, proceeding, perhaps, from his over anxiety to collect recruits, whilst the Sandleford captain, on the contrary, had neglected to secure another mate as agreed on, and could only muster the original ten of his own parish, himself included.

In this dilemma the umpires immediately proposed to divide the auxiliaries, a suggestion to which George assented with his usual sang froid and Charles with his invariable good humour.

"You had better toss up for me," said the former. "For the choice," was Horace's civil amendment, and toss they did. "Heads!" cried he of Sandleford, and heads it was; and partly caught by the young gentleman's happy knack of puffing himself, partly by the knowing manner in which he was handling his bat, George was instantly claimed by the winner, and the game began.

Sandleford went in, and it was desired that the stranger and the best of the home party should take the precedence. But our great player coquetted. "It might put their side out of spirits if by any accident he were out early in the game; he had seen a match lost, by Mr. Budd or Saunders having their wickets knocked down sooner than was expected. He would wait." Accordingly it was not till the first four had gone down with only twenty notches gained that he at last went in, "to retrieve," as he said, "the fortune of the day."

Nothing could be more imposing than his appearance. There he stood at the wicket striking his bat against the ground with impatience, pawing the earth as it were, like a race-horse at the starting-post, or a grey-hound in the slips, and friends and foes admired and wondered. Even Horace Lucas felt the effect of the fine attitude and the brilliant animation, and delivered his ball less steadily than usual, anticipating that his opponent would get at least three runs. His fears were soon quieted. "By some accident" (to use the young gentleman's own phrase) Mr. George hit up; and that

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exceedingly bad field, his cousin Charles, caught him out without a notch.

This misadventure sadly disconcerted Sandleford as well as the unfortunate champion, and put Aberleigh in high spirits. Horace bowled better than ever; the fielding was excellent; and the whole eleven were out for forty-seven notches—a wretched innings.

Aberleigh then went in; Horace, and at Horace's request, his ally Charles:—George being one of the bowlers. But poor George (to borrow once more his own words) was "out of luck, thoroughly out of luck," for in spite of all his efforts the two mates got fifty-six before they parted, and the whole score was a hundred and nine.

Eighty-two a head in the first innings! Small hopes for Sandleford, even though George went in immediately, "determined," as he said, "to conquer fortune." Small hopes for Sandleford!

"Come, Charles," said Horace Lucas, "let us see whether your bowling may not be as good as your batting. Just give your cousin one ball." And at the very first ball the stumps rattled, and the discomfited cricketer slunk away, amidst the crowing of his antagonists and the reproaches of his mates, so crestfallen, that even Horace was touched by his disconsolate countenance and humbled air. His tender-hearted cousin felt a still deeper sympathy, and almost lamented his own success.

"It is all luck, Sir," said he, in answer to a compliment from General Lucas, who stood talking to him after the match had been triumphantly won; "It is all luck! Poor George is a far better player than I am; he was so yesterday, and will be so to-morrow. This is merely the fortune of a day, a trifle not worth a word or a thought!"

"The object is trifling, I grant you, my good young friend," said the General, "and luck may have had some share in the victory; but I am much mistaken if your success and your

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cousin's mortification be not of essential benefit to both. It is one of the most salutary parts of the world's discipline, that modesty should triumph and that Pride should have a Fall."

THE TWO DOLLS.

A LUCKY day it was for little Fanny Elvington when her good aunt Delmont consented to receive her into her family, and sent for her from a fine old place, six miles from hence, Burdon Park, where she had been living with her maternal grandfather, to her own comfortable house in Brunswick Square. Poor Fanny had no natural home, her father, General Elvington, being in India with his lady; and a worse residence than the Park could hardly be devised for a little girl, since Lady Burdon was dead, Sir Richard too sickly to be troubled with children, and the care of his grand-daughter left entirely to a vulgar old nurse and a superfine housekeeper. A lucky day for Fanny was that in which she exchanged their misrule for the wise and gentle government of her good aunt Delmont.

Fanny Elvington was a nice little girl, who had a great many good qualities, and, like other little girls, a few faults; which had grown up like weeds under the neglect and mismanagement of the people at the Park, and threatened to require both time and pains to eradicate. For instance, she had a great many foolish antipathies and troublesome fears, some caught from the affectation of the housekeeper, some from the ignorance of the nurse: she shrieked at the sight of a mouse, squalled at a frog, was well nigh ready to faint at an earwig, and quite as much afraid of a spider as if she had been a fly; she ran away from a quiet ox, as if he had been a mad bull, and had such a horror of chimney-sweepers that she shrank her head under the bedclothes whenever she heard the deep cry of "sweep! sweep!" forerunning the old clothesman

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and the milkman on a frosty morning, and could hardly be persuaded to look at them, poor creatures, dressed in their tawdry tinsel and dancing round Jack of the Green on May-day. But her favourite fear, her pet aversion, was a negro; especially a little black footboy who lived next door, and whom she never saw without shrinking, and shuddering, and turning pale.

It was a most unlucky aversion for Fanny, and gave her and her aunt more trouble than all her other mislikings put together, inasmuch as Pompey came oftener in view than mouse or frog, spider or earwig, ox or chimney-sweep. How it happened nobody could tell, but Pompey was always in Fanny Elvington's way. She saw him twice as often as any one else in the house. If she went to the window, he was sure to be standing on the steps: if she walked in the Square garden, she met him crossing the pavement: she could not water her geraniums in the little court behind the house, but she heard his merry voice singing in broken English as he cleaned the knives and shoes on the other side of the wall; nay, she could not even hang out her Canary-bird's cage at the back door, but he was sure to be feeding his parrot at theirs. Go where she would, Pompey's shining black face and broad white teeth followed her: he haunted her very dreams; and the oftener she saw him, whether sleeping or waking, the more her unreasonable antipathy grew upon her. Her cousins laughed at her without effect, and her aunt's serious remonstrances were equally useless.

The person who, next to Fanny herself, suffered the most from this foolish and wicked prejudice, was poor Pompey, whose intelligence, activity, and good-humour had made him a constant favourite in his master's house, and who had sufficient sensibility to feel deeply the horror and disgust which he had inspired in his young neighbour. At first he tried to propitiate her by bringing groundsel and chickweed for her

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Canary-bird, running to meet her with an umbrella when she happened to be caught in the rain, and other small attentions, which were repelled with absolute loathing.

"Me same flesh and blood with you, missy, though skin be black," cried poor Pompey one day when pushed to extremity by Fanny's disdain, "same flesh and blood, missy!" a fact which the young lady denied with more than usual indignation; she looked at her own white skin, and she thought of his black one; and all the reasoning of her aunt failed to convince her, that where the outside was so different, the inside could by possibility be alike. At last Mrs. Delmont was fain to leave the matter to the great curer of all prejudices, called Time, who in this case seemed even slower in his operations than usual.

In the mean while, Fanny's birthday approached, and as it was within a few days of that of her cousin, Emma Delmont, it was agreed to celebrate the two festivals together. Double feasting! double holiday! double presents! never was a gayer anniversary. Mrs. Delmont's own gifts had been reserved to the conclusion of the jollity, and after the fruit was put on the table, two huge dolls, almost as big as real babies, were introduced to the little company. They excited and deserved universal admiration. The first was a young lady of the most delicate construction and the most elaborate ornament; a doll of the highest fashion, with sleeves like a bishop, a waist like a wasp, a magnificent bustle, and petticoats so full and so puffed out round the bottom, that the question of hoop or no hoop was stoutly debated between two of the elder girls. Her cheeks were very red, and her neck very white, and her ringlets in the newest possible taste. In short, she was so completely *à la mode* that a Parisian milliner might have sent her as a pattern to her fellow tradeswoman in London, or the London milliner might have returned the compliment to her sister artist over the water. Her glories, however, were fated

to be eclipsed. The moment that the second doll made its appearance, the lady of fashion was looked at no longer.

The second doll was a young gentleman, habited in the striped and braided costume which is the ordinary transition dress of boys between leaving off petticoats and assuming the doublet and hose. It was so exactly like Willy Delmont's own attire, that the astonished boy looked at himself, to be sure that the doll had not stolen the clothes off his back. The apparel, however, was not the charm that fixed the attention of the young people; the attraction was the complexion, which was of as deep and shining a black, as perfect an imitation of a negro, in tint and feature, as female ingenuity could accomplish. The face, neck, arms, and legs were all covered with black silk; and much skill was shown in shaping and sewing on the broad flat nose, large ears, and pouting lips, whilst the great white teeth and bright round eyes relieved the monotony of the colour. The wig was of black worsted, knitted, and then unravelled, as natural as if it had actually grown on the head. Perhaps the novelty (for none of the party had seen a black doll before) might increase the effect, but they all declared that they had never seen so accurate an imitation, so perfect an illusion. Even Fanny, who at first sight had almost taken the doll for her old enemy Pompey in little, and had shrunk back accordingly, began at last to catch some of the curiosity (for curiosity is a catching passion) that characterized her companions. She drew near —she gazed—at last she even touched the doll, and listened with some interest to Mrs. Delmont's detail of the trouble she found in constructing the young lady and gentleman.

"What are they made of, aunt!"

"Rags, my dear!" was the reply: "nothing but rags," continued Mrs. Delmont, unripping a little of the black gentleman's foot and the white lady's arm, and showing the linen of which they were composed;—"both alike, Fanny," pur-

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sued her good aunt, "both the same colour underneath the skin, and both the work of the same hand—like Pompey and you," added she more solemnly; "and now choose which doll you will."

And Fanny, blushing and hesitating, chose the black one; and the next day her aunt had the pleasure to see her show it to Pompey over the wall, to his infinite delight; and, in a very few days, Mrs. Delmont had the still greater pleasure to find that Fanny Elvington had not only overcome and acknowledged her prejudice, but had given Pompey a new half-crown, and had accepted groundsel for her Canary-bird from the poor negro boy.

NOTE.—About a month after sitting to me for his portrait, the young black gentleman whom I have endeavoured to describe, (I do not mean Pompey, but the doll,) set out upon his travels. He had been constructed in this little Berkshire of ours for some children in the great county of York, and a friend of mine, travelling northward, had the goodness to offer him a place in her carriage for the journey. My friend was a married woman, accompanied by her husband and another lady, and finding the doll cumbersome to pack, wrapped it in a large shawl, and carried it in her lap baby fashion. At the first inn where they stopped to dine, she handed it carelessly out of the carriage before alighting, and was much amused to see it received with the grave officious tenderness usually shown to a real infant by the nicely dressed hostess, whose consternation, when, still taking it for a living child, she caught a glimpse of the complexion, is said to have been irresistibly ludicrous. Of course my friend did not undeceive her. Indeed I believe she humoured the mistake wherever it occurred all along the north road, to the unspeakable astonishment and mystification of chambermaids and waiters.

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THE FOSTER-MOTHER.

"Pray how do you like your new schoolfellow, Sir Arthur Vere?" said Mr. Stanley to his young son Charles, as they were sauntering rather than walking in the noble park which surrounds his fine old seat of Stanley Manor, on a bright April morning; "his grandmother speaks of him as a lad of high promise."

"Of high promise, does she, sir? Whew!" quoth Master Charles, whistling to a large spaniel, and beating the sedges round a fine piece of water, by the edge of which they stood. "A lad of promise! Whew! Heigh, Dash! Heigh! One may be sure there are teal or wild ducks here by Dash's action. Heigh, Dash! Heigh!" continued Master Stanley. "And so his grandmamma speaks of Vere as a lad of promise? Whew, Dash! There's a fine fellow!"

Now Master Charles Stanley was a boy still under eleven; but being clever, bold, and spirited, an old denizen of a public school, and encouraged to talk freely at home, he spoke with a decision and freedom not very usual at his age, thus exhibiting to his excellent father, and by exhibiting enabling him to correct, the rash judgments of inexperience, and the petulant decisions of a presumptuous though generous character. In the present instance, Mr. Stanley was a good deal amused by the manner in which his son had contrived to intimate his dissent from the opinion of the good old Lady Vere, and when Charles repeated "a lad of high promise, indeed! Whew, Dash! Whew!" he replied at once to his insinuation, "And why not a boy of promise, Charles?"

"Because, sir, he's so much more like a girl. You never saw such a mincing, blushing, delicate personage as it is in all your life; afraid of getting wet in the feet lest he should catch cold, or of going without his hat lest he should spoil his complexion. He wraps half-a-dozen silk handkerchiefs

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about his neck because he is subject to sore throats; wears kid gloves at cricket for fear his hands should chap; and wraps up his feet in woollen socks because he once had a chilblain. A promising boy, indeed! Why, sir, his grandmother herself could not be a greater coddle in her own venerable person, than this precious sprig of the baronetage, Sir Francis Vere."

Mr. Stanley smiled, in spite of himself. "*You'll* come to kid gloves some time or other, Master Charles; for, as rough and red as those paws of yours are now, one may trust to the instinct of eighteen for that foppery. But eleven *is* rather early."

"Besides, sir," continued Charles, "he sports a dressing-box as large as my trunk, full of almond paste, and violet soap, and *eau de Cologne*, and oil for the hair, and all manner of essences, so that one may smell him half a mile off; and his cambric handkerchief was tossed out of the school only last week by Dr. K., because it half poisoned him by stinking of otto of roses. I hope I shall never come to that, sir, even if I do turn out a coxcomb at eighteen."

"There is no telling, Charles," replied his father. "I think you a very promising subject for any folly that may happen at that time to be the fashion. But this poor boy! What a life he must lead amongst you! And how entirely he owes his effeminacy to the accident of his being brought up amongst females!"

"I think not, sir, it is the nature of the creature. If you were to see him you would say so. All the grandmothers in the world would never make a manly lad such a milk-sop." And Charles looked at himself as he stood struttingly flourishing a switch in one hand, and caressing Dash—who, dripping with mud from the bank, was splashing him most manfully from top to toe—with the other, he looked as if he would fain have said, "all the grandmothers in the world would never have made a milk-sop of me."

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Apparently Mr. Stanley read his son's thoughts. "Ah. Charles! you know little of the effect of education, of habit, of constant association. You yourself, if exposed to similar circumstances, would have been just as likely to turn out a missy young gentleman as this poor child, Sir Arthur Vere—his very title will make against him. But talking of the power of association, come and sit down on this bank, and let Dash return to his dear sport of beating for wild fowl, and be quiet, if you can, for five minutes, whilst I tell you a story."

Now Master Charles did not very thoroughly relish this invitation. It seemed to him hardly manly to sit down for the purpose of listening to a story which, he suspected, was to be told to him for the sake of the moral; he obeyed, nevertheless, flumping himself down in the midst of a tuft of cowslips, whilst Dash, with equal comprehension and far more alacrity, returned to his search for the wild-duck's nest, the existence of which had become clear to his sagacity amongst the sedges and sallows on the water's edge.

"Nay, it is not much of a story either," said Mr. Stanley, when both were comfortably established on their soft and fragrant seat. "Not much that deserves the name of a story, though a curious fact in natural history. Do you remember admiring Dr. Lyndsay's pretty little spaniel yesterday, and wondering at his name?"*

"Romulus? Yes, sir, I do not know which I admired most,

* Odd names in dogs are by no means uncommon. I saw a lady's lap-dog yesterday who was called Spes, and the little creature being a gentleman, there was no translating the name and calling it by the more euphonious appellation of Hope—for Hope is feminine, and feminine must be, as witness Collins's ode, Lawrence's picture, Miss Sedgwick's novel of Hope Leslie, and the thousand and one seals, where she flourishes leaning elegantly against her anchor. Of course we challenged his fair and charming mistress (for most fair and most charming she is) as to the donor of her pretty pet, since to give the name of Hope to the approved emblem of Fidelity, did look rather lover-like. But the little creature had been a present from her brother, and so called in compliance with his desire—a mere classical whim, containing no allusion whatsoever.

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the venerable master, with his fine upright person and keen bright eye, his white bushy wig and three-cornered hat, and clerical coat, walking so alertly and speaking so kindly, and yet with something stately about him too, or the pretty little delicate creature, so white and shining, that followed him—rather too much like a lady's pet to be sure—but the little dog and the master matched each other well, both seemed courtly and dignified, a sort of people whose company did one honour."

"The master's company would do honour to any court in Europe, Charles. You are right there. He is one of the most learned and eminent persons in England, and as remarkable for his high qualities as for his vast attainments. But it is with Romulus that we have to do at present. Romulus's mother belonged to your kind friend Colonel Bruce, the gay, gallant, handsome sportsman, whose manliness and gentlemanliness you admire so much. She was a beautiful little spaniel, of the Marlborough breed, excellent as a sporting dog, and a great pet with her master. She had just been confined with Romulus and another pup, and was very literally in the straw; when one fine morning, in September, Colonel Bruce sallied forth with his gun and his pointers, partridge shooting, little suspecting that his poor pet, whose attention had unluckily been caught by the gun and the leathern gaiters, had left her puppies to follow him to the field. The pointers were ranging the stubble, when Colonel Bruce heard a rustling in the hedge-row close by; he saw nothing, but taking for granted that it was a hare, fired, and killed his little favourite dead upon the spot."

"Oh, papa! Poor Colonel Bruce! What a sad accident! How shocked he must have been!"

"Shocked enough, Charles. Even now he says he can scarcely bear to think of it. The poor little creature, when he discovered her amongst the long grass and reeds, uttered one faint moan, looked up in his face fondly and piteously,

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tried to lick his hand, then gave one shiver, stretched out her delicate feet, and died. She, however, was dead. But the puppies! What was to become of them? Only three days old, and smaller than rats!"

"What did become of them, father?"

"Why, luckily, Mrs. Bruce had a favourite cat, whose kittens had just been taken from her. The pups were put to pussy, who took to them as if they had been her own offspring, and brought them up with all imaginable care and success."

"Well, sir, now I find the reason of the name.—Well?"

"Romulus you have seen. He is rather smaller, perhaps, than he might have been if nursed by his own mother, but that, in a Marlborough spaniel, is a merit; and Remus (for so, of course, the brother twin was called) is smaller still. Their foster-mother did them all possible justice; and was fonder of them, and nourished them longer than she had ever been known to do by her own kittens. But the extraordinary part of the story is, that with the cat's milk these little doglings imbibed also the cat's habits; would sit and wash their faces with their paws, were excellent mousers, and would watch a rat-hole for an hour."

"Oh, papa!"

"Fact, I assure you, Charles. The celebrated cat, who was turned into a lady at the prayer of her master, never caught a mouse in better style than Romulus, who, moreover, would no more wet his feet than his purring foster-mother, or Sir Arthur Vere."

"Oh, father!"

"It's the simple truth, I assure you, Charles; and proceeds, in both instances, from the same cause, example and education; and the self-same story, which throws some light on the origin of that poor boy's effeminacy, may also afford good hope of his reformation; for whilst Romulus, under the tender care of Dr. Lyndsay, which (no offence to him) may in this instance be compared to the tutelage of Lady Vere, con-

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tinues to pursue and practise all his cattish propensities and habits, Remus, turned into Colonel Bruce's kennel, which (no offence to that repository of doggish learning) may be not unaptly likened to the riotous seminary, yclept a public school, has recovered all his canine hardihood and accomplishments, is famous in covert and hedge-row, as good a water dog as Dash himself, and as little likely to notice a mouse, or wash his face with his paws, as that sagacious quadruped. And now, Charles, may we not have hopes of Sir Arthur ?"

And Charles assented—and so it proved. Before two years had elapsed, young Vere, stimulated by ridicule, had flung aside his kid gloves, his woollen socks, his perfumery, and his foppery, had overcome his horror of wet feet and chapped hands, and had become the best rower, and the second best cricketer of his form.

N. B.—The canine part of my little story is literally true. Romulus is still living, and the property of no less a person than the venerable P——, of M—— College, the learned and excellent Dr. R——.

YOUNG MASTER BEN.

It was about seven o'clock one evening in the Christmas week, that I was sitting alone in our little parlour, with my feet on the fender, my dog Dash reclining against my knee, (I beg Dash's pardon for having reckoned him as nobody,) a glowing fire before me, and an apple roasting on the hob,—doing nothing, unless occasionally turning the apple or patting Dash's beautiful head may be accounted doings,—and entirely immersed in that perfection of lazy comfort—that piece of dreamy delight yclept a reverie.

There was, too, that additional zest to the enjoyment of in-door warmth and comfort which is derived from the effect of strong contrast without. The weather was what is usually

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and most expressively termed—bitter. Snow lay deep on the ground, and the dark cloudy sky gave token that the first interval of calm would produce another fall. At the moment of which I speak, the wind was too high even for a snow-storm; the fierce north-east howled amain, and the icy bushes in the hedge-rows rattled and crackled in the tempest, whilst the large boughs of the trees creaked like the masts of a ship at sea. It is strange that these noises, betokening so much misery to the poor wretches doomed to wander abroad, should add to the sense of snugness and security at home;—but so it is! The selfishness, however unamiable, is too general to be ashamed of, or even to lament over; and, perhaps, a silent thankfulness for one's own superior comforts may tend to throw into the feeling that portion of good which will generally be found in the inward meditations of every human being not absolutely wicked; for the thoughts of an hour, as well as the actions of a life, are of mingled yarn; none, I fear, all virtuous,—few, I trust, utterly wicked.

My enjoyment of that blessed state the "far' niente" was, however, much too dreamy and vague to permit me to analyze my own sensations. And yet my reverie was not wholly pleasurable either. We lived in the midst of the disturbed districts; my father was at B., attending his duty (a very painful one on this occasion) as chairman of the bench; and though I had every reason to believe that the evil spirit was subsiding, and that he was at that instant sitting, as quietly and as snugly as myself, with his friend the high sheriff and his brother magistrates in a warm, comfortable, elegant room at the Crown Inn, (for happen what may, justices must dine!) or at the worst, seated by a large fire taking examinations in the council chamber at B., still no one who lived within reach of the armed peasantry, or of the exaggerated and still more frightful rumours that preceded their approach, or who had witnessed, as I had done, the terrific blaze of the almost nightly conflagrations, could get rid of the vague

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idea of danger which might arrive at any moment, especially to one notoriously and actively engaged in putting down the mischief. Our parish had remained, it is true, happily free from the contagion; still it raged all around, east, west, north, and south; we were on a well-frequented highway, almost at the very point where four roads met, and the mobs travelled so far and so fast, that there was no telling at what hour or from what point of the compass our quiet village might be invaded.

Just as thoughts like these were beginning to traverse the blissful thoughtfulness of my reverie, a noise of shouting voices and rushing feet from the end of the street struck my ear. Dash started up instantly, and I was preparing to ring the bell and to be frightened, when a sound, well known to each of us, pacified us both. Dash, who is a superb old English spaniel, gave his magnificent ears a mighty shake; and making his accustomed three turns on the hearth-rug, lay down before the fire; and I, with a strangely modified feeling, alarm subsiding into amazed curiosity, proceeded to the door to examine into the cause of the uproar.

The sound which produced this consolatory effect was the well-known and peculiar whistle of Master Ben Emery,—a sound which, while it gave token of every variety of boyish mischief, was yet a most comfortable assurance against any thing worse.

Young Master Ben was one of those truly English personages, who, even in boyhood, show token of the character that is to be—a humourist in embryo, an oddity, a wag. His father was a better sort of labourer, a kind of bailiff or upper man in the service of a neighbouring farmer, and had brought up a large family honestly and creditably. All of these were now happily out of the way,—some at service, some in business, some married, and some dead,—with the exception of Benjamin, the youngest born, his mother's darling and plague. Ben was not, as a mother's darling often is—a beauty. His carrotty

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locks forbade any claim to that title, though he had the lively blue eye and pleasant smile which so often accompany that complexion, and cause a general resemblance, a kind of family likeness, between red-haired people. In person he was a thin, stunted, dwarfish boy of fourteen, small and light enough to pass for ten, who made use of his actual age to evade a longer attendance at the charity school, the master of which, a dull personage no way fit to cope with Ben's biting jests, acquiescing in the young gentleman's own account of his scholarship purely to get rid of him; whilst his smallness of size and look of youth and debility he turned to account in another way, pleading his deficiency in bulk and stature and general weakness and delicacy as a reason for not going to work at the farm with his father, whose master had consented to employ him to drive the team. He weakly! Why in play or in mischief he was a pocket Hercules! has beaten big Bob the blacksmith at quoits; and thrown Titus Penwyn, the Cornish boy, in wrestling. Delicate! why if the sun or the world would but have stood still for the time, there is no doubt but he could have played at cricket for eight-and-forty hours running, without requiring more pause than the usual fifteen minutes between the innings. No exercise that bore the name of sport was too much for him; sheer labour was another matter.

Not only did he plead weakness and delicacy to escape the promotion of plough-boy at farmer Brookes's, but when hired by his father to keep Master Simmons's sheep,—an employment that seemed made for him, inasmuch as there was for ten hours in the day nothing to do but to lie on a bank and practise a certain pastoral flageolet with which he used to go too-tooing through the village,—he contrived to get dismissed in three days for incapacity and contumacy; and even when proffered by his mother to look after her crony dame Welles's Welsh cow, an animal famous for getting out of bounds, not for the lucre of gain, but simply, as she expressed it, to keep

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both the creatures out of mischief, his services were rejected by the prudent dame with the observation, that obstropulous and wild as her beast might be, Ben was incomparably the most unmanageable of the two—a proof of bad reputation which so enraged his father, that he only escaped a sound flogging by climbing up a tree like a squirrel, and sleeping all night in the coppice amidst the fern and the bushes.

It was the very day after this misadventure, that Ben contrived to attach himself to our little establishment as a sort of help to our boy John. How he managed nobody can tell, for all the house knew him and his character, and every body in it held him for the very incarnation of mischief; but here he is, in prime favour with every one, not regularly paid and hired to be sure, but receiving sufficient and comfortable wages in the shape of pretty constant dinners and suppers, frequent largesses of sixpences and shillings, and occasional doles of wearing apparel. I question whether he be not more expensive to our small household than that model of a boy John, himself. Having said this, it is but right to add that he is nearly as useful in his own wild way; will do any thing on earth that he thinks can serve or please, especially if he be not ordered to do it (for he has a Sir-John-Falstaff-like aversion to compulsion); makes himself in one way or other agreeable to the whole family—always excepting a certain under-maid called Betsy, against whom he has a spite; and although renowned all over the parish for story-telling, a peccadillo which I really believe he cannot help, never takes any of us in, (for we know him so well that we never dream of believing him,) unless now and then when he happens to speak truth, which has the same effect in deceiving his hearers as falsehood from other people.

We keep Ben because we like him. Why he came to us, heaven knows! Perhaps for the same reason; perhaps to avoid the flogging which roosting in the coppice had delayed, but not averted; perhaps attracted by a clever jay of mine,

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now, alas! no more—a bird of great accomplishment, and almost as saucy as himself; perhaps for the chance of handling a certain gun which he had seen John cleaning, an implement of noise and mischief that just suits his fancy, and which he brandishes of a night about the garden, pretending to hear thieves; perhaps to ride a fine young horse of ours which nobody else can ride, for he is an excellent horseman, and with his quick wit and light weight, seems born for a jockey; perhaps, and this is the likeliest cause of all, to have opportunity for playing tricks on poor Betsy, whom neither I nor my maid Anne, and I believe she tries all in her power, can protect from his elvish machinations. But that very day had he spoilt my dinner (most unintentionally as far as his design went) by throwing a snow-ball at her as she stood by the kitchen fire, which, from her suddenly starting aside to avoid the missile, alighted on the back of a fowl in the act of being roasted, which was thereby rendered totally uneatable. This feat had, of course, brought him into great disgrace in the lower regions; and since half-past five, when the misadventure took place, nothing had been seen or heard of the young gentleman till now that his repeated and well-known whistle gave token of his vicinity.

Immediately after Ben's whistle, another sound was heard in the melée rising amidst the tramp of feet bounding along the frosty path from which the snow had been swept, the shouts and cries of children escaping and pursued, and the distant tinkling of a bell,—another well-known sound, the loud, gruff, angry voice of Master Clarke, the parish beadle.

This worthy functionary was a person who, an enemy to mischievous boys, by virtue of his office, had contrived to render his post and his person peculiarly obnoxious to that small rabble of the village, of whom Ben might be considered the ringleader, by a sour stern severity of aspect and character, an unrelenting aversion to frolic or pastime of any sort, and an alacrity in pursuing and punishing the unhappy culprits, which

came in strong contrast with his usual stolid slowness of act and word. Of course, Master Clarke could not fail to be unpopular; and the mingled noises of his voice and of the bell reminded me that that very morning he had been to our house to inform his Worship that every night, as soon as he sat down to supper, his shop-bell had been rung and rung and rung, not by profitable customers, but by some invisible enemies, boys of course, whom he was determined to catch, if catch he could, and to punish with all the severity of his rod of office. His Worship, an indulgent and kindly personage, heard his complaints, and smiled and shook his head, and even threw away upon him a little of that unprofitable commodity called good advice!—"Boys will be boys, Master Clarke," said he; "you were one once, and so was I. Better leave the bell unanswered for a night or two; take no notice, and depend on it they'll soon tire of their frolic."

This recollection, which came across me as I passed from the door of the parlour to the door of the hall, completely enlightened me as to the cause of the uproar; and I was prepared to see, by the pale cold dim snow-light, Master Clarke, with a screaming struggling urchin in either hand, (little Dick Wilson, poor fellow! who had but just donned the doublet and hose, and Sam Sewell, who is still in petticoats,) in full chase of the larger fry who were flying before his fury, whilst Master Ben was lying perdu in a corner of our court, under shadow of the wall which he had contrived to leap or to scramble over. The sound of the distant ringing seemed to augment with every stride that Master Clarke took, who, half maddened with that noise, and with a sudden whistle which Ben again sent forth from his hiding-place under the wall, suddenly abandoned his pursuit, and was making for our gate, when all at once the man—one of the largest proportions, colossal, gigantic!—seemed pulled back with a mighty jerk by some invisible cause, and was laid prostrate and sprawling in the snowy kennel. Ben jumped on the wall, the better to

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survey and laugh at him, as Puck might have done at Bottom, and the rest of the crew dancing with shouts of triumph round their fallen enemy, like the make-believe fairies round Falstaff in the guise of Herne the Hunter. The cause of this downfal was soon discovered to be a strong cord tied at one end to Master Clarke's coat, at the other to the bell at his shop door—but how fastened, or by whom, this deponent saith not. Betsy, indeed, avers, that the cord much resembles one which she herself missed that very evening from John and Ben's bedstead; and the beadle hath his own suspicions; but as no certain proof could be obtained, Master Ben hath escaped scot-free.

PATTY'S NEW HAT.

WANDERING about the meadows one morning last May, absorbed in the pastoral beauty of the season and the scenery, I was overtaken by a heavy shower just as I passed old Mrs. Matthews's great farm-house, and forced to run for shelter to her hospitable porch. A pleasant shelter in good truth I found there. The green pastures dotted with fine old trees stretching all around; the clear brook winding about them turning and returning on its course, as if loath to depart; the rude cart-track leading through the ford; the neater pathway with its foot-bridge; the village spire rising amongst a cluster of cottages, all but the roofs and chimneys concealed by a grove of oaks; the woody back-ground, and the blue hills in the distance, all so flowery and bowery in the pleasant month of May; the nightingales singing; the bells ringing; and the porch itself, around which a honeysuckle in full bloom was wreathing its sweet flowers, giving out such an odour in the rain, as in dry weather nothing but the twilight will bring forth—an atmosphere of fragrance. The whole porch was alive and

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musical with bees, who, happy rogues, instead of being routed by the wet, only folded their wings the closer, and dived the deeper into the honey-tubes, enjoying, as it seemed, so good an excuse for creeping still farther within their flowery lodgement. It is hard to say which enjoyed the sweet breath of the shower and the honeysuckle most, the bees or I; but the rain began to drive so fast, that at the end of five minutes I was not sorry to be discovered by a little girl belonging to the family; and, first, ushered into the spacious kitchen, with its heavy oak table, its curtained chimney corner, its bacon rack loaded with enormous flitches, and its ample dresser, glittering with crockery ware; and, finally, conducted by Mrs. Matthews herself into her own comfortable parlour, and snugly settled there with herself and her eldest grand-daughter, a woman grown; whilst the younger sister, a smiling light-footed lass of eleven or there-abouts, tripped off to find a boy to convey a message to my family, requesting them to send for me, the rain being now too decided to admit of any prospect of my walking home.

The sort of bustle which my reception had caused having subsided, I found great amusement in watching my hospitable hostess, and listening to a dialogue, if so it may be called, between her pretty grand-daughter and herself, which at once let me into a little love secret, and gave me an opportunity of observing one, of whose occasional oddities I had all my life heard a great deal.

Mrs. Matthews was one of the most remarkable persons in these parts; a capital farmer, a most intelligent parish officer, and in her domestic government not a little resembling one of the finest sketches which Mr. Crabbe's graphical pen ever produced.

> "Next died the widow Goe, an active dame
> Famed ten miles round, and worthy all her fame;
> She lost her husband when their loves were young,
> But kept her farm, her credit, and her tongue:

Full thirty years she ruled with matchless skill,
With guiding judgment and resistless will;
Advice she scorn'd, rebellions she suppress'd,
And sons and servants bow'd at her behest.
No parish business in the place could stir
Without direction or assent from her;
In turn she took each office as it fell,
Knew all their duties and discharged them well.
She match'd both sons and daughters to her mind,
And lent them eyes, for love she heard was blind."

Parish Register.

Great power of body and mind was visible in her robust person and massive countenance; and there was both humour and intelligence in her acute smile, and in the keen grey eye that glanced from under her spectacles. All that she said bore the stamp of sense; but at this time she was in no talking mood, and on my begging that I might cause no interruption, resumed her seat and her labours in silent composure. She sat at a little table mending a fustian jacket belonging to one of her sons—a sort of masculine job which suited her much better than a more delicate piece of sempstress-ship would probably have done; indeed, the tailor's needle, which she brandished with great skill, the whity-brown thread tied round her neck, and the huge dull-looking *shears*, (one can't make up one's mind to call such a machine scissars,) which in company with an enormous pincushion dangled from her apron-string, figuring as the pendant to a most formidable bunch of keys, formed altogether such a working apparatus as shall hardly be matched in these days of polished cutlery and cobwebby cotton-thread.

On the other side of the little table sat her pretty granddaughter Patty, a black-eyed young woman, with a bright complexion, a neat trim figure, and a general air of gentility considerably above her station. She was trimming a very smart straw hat with pink ribands: trimming and untrimming, for the bows were tied and untied, taken off and put on,

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and taken off again, with a look of impatience and discontent, not common to a damsel of seventeen when contemplating a new piece of finery. The poor little lass was evidently out of sorts. She sighed, and quirked, and fidgeted, and seemed ready to cry; whilst her grandmother just glanced at her from under her spectacles, pursed up her mouth, and contrived with some difficulty not to laugh. At last Patty spoke.

"Now, grandmother, you will let me go to Chapel Row revel this afternoon, won't you?"

"Humph," said Mrs. Matthews.

"It hardly rains at all, grandmother!"

"Humph!" again said Mrs. Matthews, opening the prodigious scissars with which she was amputating, so to say, a button, and directing the rounded end significantly to my wet shawl, whilst the sharp point was reverted towards the dripping honeysuckle. "Humph!"

"There's no dirt to signify!"

Another "Humph!" and another point to the draggled tail of my white gown.

"At all events, it's going to clear."

Two "Humphs!" and two points, one to the clouds, and one to the barometer.

"It's only seven miles," said Patty; "and if the horses are wanted, I can walk."

"Humph!" quoth Mrs. Matthews.

"My aunt Ellis will be there, and my cousin Mary."

"Humph!" again said Mrs. Matthews.

"And if a person is coming here on business, what can I be wanted for when you are at home, grandmother?"

"Humph!" once again was the answer.

"What business can any one have with me?"

Another "Humph!"

"My cousin Mary will be so disappointed!"

"Humph!"

"And I half promised my cousin William—poor William!"

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"Humph!" again.

"Poor William! Oh, grandmother, do let me go! And I've got my new hat and all—just such a hat as William likes! Poor William! You will let me go, grandmother?"

And receiving no answer but a very unequivocal "Humph!" poor Patty threw down her straw hat, fetched a deep sigh, and sat in a most disconsolate attitude, snipping her pink riband to pieces; Mrs. Matthews went on manfully with her "stitchery;" and for ten minutes there was a dead pause. It was at length broken by my little friend and introducer, Susan, who was standing at the window, and exclaimed—"Who is this riding up the meadow all through the rain? Look!—see!—I do think—no, it can't be—yes, it is—it is certainly my cousin William Ellis! Look, grandmother!"

"Humph!" said Mrs. Matthews.

"What can cousin William be coming for?" continued Susan.

"Humph!" quoth Mrs. Matthews.

"Oh, I know!—I know!" screamed Susan, clapping her hands and jumping for joy as she saw the changed expression of Patty's countenance,—the beaming delight, succeeded by a pretty downcast shamefacedness, as she turned away from her grandmother's arch smile and archer nod. "I know!—I know!" shouted Susan.

"Humph!" said Mrs. Matthews.

"For shame, Susan! Pray don't, grandmother!" said Patty, imploringly.

"For shame! Why I did not say he was coming to court Patty! Did I, grandmother!" returned Susan.

"And I take this good lady to witness," replied Mrs. Matthews, as Patty, gathering up her hat and her scraps of riband, prepared to make her escape—"I take you all to witness that I have said nothing of any sort. Get along with you, Patty!" added she, "you have spoiled your pink trimming; but I think you are likely to want white ribands next, and, if you put me

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in mind, I'll buy them for you!" And, smiling in spite of herself, the happy girl ran out of the room.

COTTAGE NAMES.

"'Why Lonicera wilt thou name thy child?
I ask'd the gardener's wife in accents mild.
'We have a right,' replied the sturdy dame,
And Lonicera was the infant's name." CRABBE.

"A commodity of good names." SHAKSPEARE.

FROM the time of Goldsmith down to the present day fine names have been the ridicule of comic authors, and the aversion of sensible people, notwithstanding which the evil has increased almost in proportion to its reprobation. Miss Clementina Wilhelmina Stubbs was but a type of the Julias, the Isabels, and the Helens of this accomplished age. I should not, however, so much mind if this folly were comprised in that domain of cold gentility, to which affectation usually confines itself. One does not regard seeing Miss Arabella seated at the piano, or her little sister Leonora tottling across the carpet to show her new pink shoes. That is in the usual course of events. But the fashion spreads deeper and wider; the village is infected, and the village green; Amelias and Claras sweep your rooms and cook your dinners, gentle Sophias milk your cows, and if you ask a pretty smiling girl at a cottage door to tell you her name, the rosy lips lisp out Caroline.* It was but the other day that I went into a neigh-

* A great number of children, amongst the lower orders, are Carolines. That does not, however, wholly proceed from a love of the appellation; though I believe that a queen Margery or a queen Sarah would have had fewer name-sakes. A clergyman in my neighbourhood used to mistake the sound, and christen the babies Catharine;—a wise error, for Kate is a noble abbreviation

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bour's to procure a messenger, and found the errand disputed by a gentle Georgina without a shoe, and a fair Augusta with half a frock. Now this is a sad thing. One looks upon cottage names as a part of cottage furniture, of the costume, and is as much discomposed by the change as a painter of interiors would be who should find a Grecian couch instead of an oaken settle by the side of the wide open hearth. In fine houses fine names do not signify; though I would humbly suggest to godfathers and godmothers, papas, mammas, maiden aunts, nurses, and gossips in general, the unconscious injury that they are doing to novelists, poets, dramatic writers, and the whole fraternity of authors, by trespassing on their (nominal) property, infringing their patent, encroaching on their privilege, underselling their stock in trade, depreciating their currency, and finally robbing poor heroes and heroines of their solitary possession, the only thing they can call their own. Shakspeare has an admonition much to the purpose, "he who filches from me my *good name*," and so forth. Did they never hear *that?* never see Othello? never read Elegant Extracts? never learn the speech by rote out of Enfield's Speaker? If they did, I must say the lesson has been as completely thrown away as lessons of morality commonly are. Sponsors in these days think no more harm of "filching a name" than a sparrow does of robbing a cherry tree.

This, however, is an affair of conscience or of taste, and conscience and taste are delicate points to meddle with, especially the latter. People will please their fancies, and every lady has her favourite names. I myself have several, and they are mostly short and simple. Jane, that queenly name! Jane Seymour, Jane Grey, "the noble Jane de Monford;"—Anne, to which lady seems to belong as of right,—a late celebrated Scottish duke is said to have caused an illegitimate daughter to be so baptized, Lady-Anne, and my friend Allan Cunningham's beautiful ballad has joined the name and the title still more inseparably;—Mary, which is as common as a

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white violet, and, like that, has something indestructibly sweet and simple, and fit for all wear, high or low, suits the cottage or the palace, the garden or the field, the pretty or the ugly, the old or the young;—Margaret, Marguerite—the pearl! the daisy! Oh name of romance and of minstrelsy, which brings the days of chivalry to mind, and the worship of flowers and of ladies fair!—Emily, in which all womanly sweetness seems bound up—perhaps this is the effect of the association of ideas* —I know so many charming Emilys;—and Susan, the sprightly, the gentle, the home-loving, the kind;—association again! But certainly there are some names which seem to belong to particular classes of character, to form the mind and even to influence the destiny: Louisa, now;—is not your Louisa necessarily a die-away damsel, who reads novels, and holds her head on one side, languishing and given to love? Is not Lucy a pretty *soubrette*, a wearer of cast gowns and cast smiles, smart and coquettish? Must not Emma, as a matter of course, prove epistolary, if only for the sake of her signature? And is there not great danger that Laura may go a step further, write poetry and publish? Oh beware, dear godmammas, when you call an innocent baby after Petrarch's muse! Think of the peril! Beware.

Next to names simple in themselves, those which fall easily into diminutiveness seem to me most desirable. All abbreviations are pretty—Lizzy, Bessy, Sophy, Fanny—the prettiest of all! There is something so familiar, so homelike, so affectionate in the sound,—it seems to tell in one short word a story of family love, to vouch for the amiableness of both parties. I never thought one of the most brilliant and elegant women in England quite so charming as she really is, till I heard her call her younger sister "Annie." It seemed to

* There is another association which cannot be forgotten in speaking of Emily. It belongs to Palemon and Arcite, that most fortunate of stories, which comes to us consecrated by the genius of Chaucer, and of Dryden, of Fletcher, and of Shakspeare.

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remove at once the almost repellent quality which belongs to extreme polish,—gave a genial warmth to her brightness, became her like a smile. There was a tenderness in the voice too, a delay, a dwelling on the double consonant, giving to English something of the charm of Italian pronunciation, which I have noticed only in two persons, who are, I think, the most graceful speakers and readers of my acquaintance. "Annie!" If she had called her sister Anna-Maria, according to the register, I should have admired, and feared, and shunned her to my dying day. That little word made us friends immediately. I like manly abbreviations too,—who does not?—they say so much for character. You may know what one man thinks of another by his manner of calling him. Thomas and James and Richard and William are stupid young gentlemen; Tom and Jem and Dick and Will are fine spirited fellows. Henry now, what a soft swain your Henry is! the proper theme of gentle poesy; a name to fall in love withal; devoted at the font to song and sonnet, and the tender passion; a baptized inamorato; a christened hero. Call him Harry, and see how you ameliorate his condition. The man is free again, turned out of song and sonnet and romance, and young ladies' hearts. Shakspeare understood this well, when he wrote of Prince Hal and Harry Hotspur. To have called them Henry would have spoiled both characters. George and Charles are unlucky in this respect; they have no diminutives, and what mouthfuls of monosyllables they are! names royal too, and therefore unshortened. A king must be of a very rare class who should afford to be called by short-hand;—very popular to tempt the rogues, well conditioned to endure it, wise and strong to afford it. Our Harry the Fifth, the conqueror of Agincourt, might and did; and the French Henri Quatre; and now and then a usurper. Niccola Rienzi, Oliver Cromwell, and Napoleon, the noblest of names, have all undergone such transformation; and indeed the Roman tribune, the least known but not perhaps the least remarkable of the three; he who, born of an

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innkeeper and a washerwoman, restored for a while the free republic of Rome; the friend of Petrarch, the arbiter of princes, the summoner of emperors, the arraigner of popes—is scarcely known even in the grave page of history by any other appellation than that of Cola Rienzi—as who should say *Nick.*

I have said that names sometimes form the character. Sometimes, on the other hand, they are like dreams, and become true by contraries; especially if you christen after the virtues. Thus the wildest flirt of my acquaintance happens to be a Miss Prudentia—a second sister, too, whose elder is not likely to marry, so that the misnomer is palpable; and the greatest scold I ever encountered, the arrantest virago, was a Mrs. Patience. The Graces are usually awkward gawkies, and the Belles all through the alphabet, from Annabelle downward, are a generation of frights. The Floras are sure to be pale puny girls, and the Roses are apt to wither on the virgin stalk. Call a boy after some distinguished character, and the contradiction grows still more glaring. Your Foxes and Hampdens and Sidneys range themselves on the ministerial benches, your Pitts and Melvilles turn out rank radicals, your Andrew Marvels take bribes, and your Nelsons run away. There is a fatality in those Christian surnames, those baptized heathens; they are sure never to fit, never run well with other names. In the case of females, especially, there is a double danger; even if they seem to march evenly at first, see how they end. The most remarkable instance of this acquired incongruity I ever knew befell a fair Highlander, one of my schoolfellows. Her mother, claiming to be sprung from the Bruce family, would call her daughter after good king Robert, and nothing could be better matched than her two noble Scottish names, Bruce Campbell: they suited her like her tartan dress. She was a tall, graceful, blue-eyed girl, with high spirits and some pride, an air compounded of the palace and the mountain, a sort of wild royalty, and a step that

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puzzled alike our French dancing-master and our English drill-sergeant,—it was so unlike what either of them taught, so un-French, so un-English, and yet so bounding and free. She left school, and for some years I heard nothing more of her than that she was happily married. Last summer I had the pleasure of meeting a cousin of hers, (as near I should think as within the eighth degree,) and began immediately tc inquire for my fair friend. "I understand," said I, "that she married early and well?"—"Yes, very," was the reply; "but she had the misfortune to lose Mr. Smith in the second year of their nuptials. She is now, however, re-married to a Mr. Brown."—I heard no more! I was petrified. Bruce Smith! Imagine such a conjunction! And now Bruce Brown! fancy that! There is an "apt alliteration" for you! And even if she should take refuge in initials, think of B. B.! "P. P., clerk of this parish," has the advantage both in look and sound. Oh, your proper names are dangerous! It is the practice of the Americans, and with them it may perhaps be politic and patriotic to diffuse and perpetuate the memory of their Washingtons and Jeffersons amongst the descendants of the people whom they freed, to give the new generation a sort of personal interest in their fame. But why should we adopt the fashion? And why should it spread? as spread it does. Those papas and mammas who labour under the misfortune of a plebeian surname do the best to lighten the calamity to their offspring by an harmonious and dignified *prænomen*, sometimes taken from friends or acquaintance chosen as sponsors for the good gift of a seemly appellation; sometimes culled from history; sometimes from that pseudo-history called a novel; sometimes from the peerage; sometimes from the Racing Calendar, which, by the bye, does not fail to return the compliment. One ingenious gentleman, in a northern county, even christened his eldest hope after the village in which he was born,—Allonby of Allonby!—How well it looks! and what a pity that the wretched little word "Short"

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should have a right to intrude! Allonby Short; "oh what a falling off was there!"—If the son should have half his father's genius, he will get an act of parliament, and discard it altogether.

The prefixing of a little miserable name to another of the same class is also exceedingly fashionable amongst our *parvenus.* They seem to think that in names, as in figures, value increases tenfold by the addition of a cipher. Hence the unnatural and portentous union of hideous monosyllables on name-tickets and door-plates, where two "low words oft creep in one dull line." Hence your White Sharps, your Ford Greens, your Hall Gills, and other appellations of the same *calibre,* which stare you in the face go where you will, and are clung to with a jealous tenacity of which the Percies and Howards and Cavendishes (for whom one name is enough) never dream. Hence all varieties in spelling, devices to turn the vulgar to the genteel by the mere change of a letter:* hence the De's and the Fitz's, by which good common English is transmogrified into bad French, to be mis-pronounced by the ignorant and laughed at by the wise,—the deserved and inevitable fate of pretension, ridiculous in every thing, and most of all in cottage names.

* It is a pity that the hero of Mr. Lamb's excellent farce, "Mr. H.," did not possess a little of this sort of ingenuity. I am convinced that the addition or omission of a few letters, or even the transposition, the making an anagram of the word, or some such quip or quiddity, would have converted "Hog's-flesh" into a very respectable appellation. Did not Miss Hannah K., for instance, make herself at once genteel and happy by merely striking out the first letter and the last—vile useless aspirates? And did not Martha D. become a fashionable lady at a stroke by one bold *erratum* "for Martha read Matilda" in the first leaf of that domestic Register, the family Bible? There is nothing so ingenious under the sun as your genuine name-coiner! A forger by profession is less dexterous, a coat-of-arms maker less imaginative. It is the very triumph of invention.

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LITTLE MISS WREN.

Of all the seasons for marriages that I have ever known, this wet, dirty, snowy, frosty winter, (of 1829,) with its hot fits and its cold fits, and its fogs that were neither hot nor cold, but a happy mixture of all the evils of both—chilly as sleet, stifling as steam;—of all seasons, this, which having murderously slaughtered two hundred head of fine geraniums, my property, I set down as fatal;—of all the seasons that I remember, this has been the most fertile in marriages. Half the belles in our neighbourhood have disappeared,—not whisked away by fraud or force, as Lovelace carried off Clarissa, but decorously wooed and won, as Sir Charles Grandison wedded Miss Byron. Still they are gone. On Monday a rich member of parliament drives away to Paris with one county beauty; on Tuesday a dashing Captain of Hussars sets out for Florence with another; on Wednesday a third glides quietly away to a country parsonage with her handsome bridegroom, a young clergyman. Balls and concerts are spangled with silver favours; white gloves are your only present; the pretty nuptial cards knotted together with satin riband, fly about like so many doves; and bride-cake is in such abundance, that even the little boys and girls at home for the holidays, chartered gluttons as they are, cry "Hold, enough!"

There is no end to the shapes in which matrimony meets you. Miss A.'s servant comes to you wanting a place—her mistress is going to be married! Mr. B.'s hunters are on sale, their master is going to be married! The dress-maker won't undertake to make a new gown under a fortnight—Lady C. is going to be married! The Grove is taken by a Mr. D., of whom nobody knows any thing—except that he is going to

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be married! Nay, marriages jostle: my worthy friend, the Rector of Ashley, a most popular person at all times, and certainly the favourite marrier of the county, was wanted to tie the hymeneal knot the same morning by two couples who live forty miles apart; and Sir Edward E.'s wedding has been delayed for a fortnight, because that grand minister to the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious" bridals, the coachmaker, was going to be married himself!

Nothing but wedding parties are heard of hereabouts; not to be engaged to two or three would be a sad loss of caste and of consequence. I, for my own part, have been invited by half a dozen young ladies to see them exchange their freedom "for a name and for a ring," and am just returned from the most magnificent espousals that have been celebrated even in this season of wedlock.

One of the most distinguished and remarkable persons in these parts, not very fruitful of celebrated personages, is undoubtedly my fair friend Miss Philippa Wren, of Wrensnest in this county,—a lady well known through the neighbourhood, not merely because she is an heiress of good family, and heiresses of any sort are rarities every where, nor because she is amiable and accomplished, as the newspapers say of heiresses and of young ladies in general; but for a quality proper and peculiar to her own individual person,—that quality, in short, which has procured for her the universal cognomen of little Miss Wren.

Partly, no doubt, this distinguishing characteristic may have belonged to her by inheritance. The Wrens have been a tiny race from generation to generation, gradually diminishing in size and stature, tapering away like the point of a pyramid, until they reached the very climax of smallness in the person of their fair descendant, the least woman, not to be quite a dwarf, that ever was seen out of Lilliput.

When born it was such a fairy that nurses, doctors, aunts, and grandmammas, almost lost the fear of rearing in the per-

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plexity of dressing it, flung away the superb baby-linen in despair, and were fain to wrap the young stranger in cotton, until the apparel of a neighbouring doll could be borrowed for its service. All the gossips gazed, marvelled, and admired, and as time wore on, and the little lady of the manor grew older, without, as it seemed, growing bigger, the admiration increased. Every epoch of infancy was a fresh theme of village wonder. Walking and talking assumed, in her case, the form of miracles; and that such an atom should cut teeth seemed little less incredible than that Richard should be born with them. All through her childhood, the tiny heiress passed, with every stranger that saw her, for a rare specimen of precocious talent, was my-deared, petted, fondled, and noticed at eighteen, and might now, at five and twenty, sink at least fifteen years of her age with perfect impunity, in any company in Europe.

Such a deception, however, is the farthest thing possible from her desire. She would rather, if one of the two evils must be endured, look fifteen years older. Shrewd, quick-witted, keen and capable on all other points, the peculiarity of her person has in this, as in many other instances, influenced her character and her destiny. The sole object of her ambition, "vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself," is to be great (I use the word in the purely primitive sense, large, big, and tall) in despite of nature. Even that ambitious fowl, a she-bantam, does not imitate more absurdly the magnificent demeanour of a Poland hen, than poor Miss Wren emulates the superb and dignified graces of her next neighbour, Miss Stork, a grenadier of a woman, who labours under the converse misfortune to that which has befallen herself, and stands six feet without her shoes. Never was erectness so exemplary and unrelaxing. A poker seems to poke when compared with her perpendicularity. Governesses and dancing-masters reversed, in her case, their usual lectures, complained of her inflexible uprightness, and scolded her for holding up her head. She

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constantly perches herself on the highest chair in the room, and stands, walks, and dances on tiptoe,—a process which, like most attempts to seem what we are not, only serves to make her calamity the more remarkable.

In her dress she practises the same manœuvres with the same ill success; wears very high bonnets with very high plumes; piles as many flowers upon head as might serve to deck a may-pole; has heels to her boots, false bottoms to her slippers; and punctually follows, in the rest of her equipment, the fashion of her above-mentioned neighbour, Miss Stork, the ultimate object of her ambition. Frills, collars, flounces, and trimmings of all sorts are made exactly after her pattern, deducting no inch of fulness or atom of width; so that, the fair model Miss Stork herself being by no means sparing of adornments, her poor little imitator looks like a mere bundle of finery, an abridgment of the reigning fashion, and makes pretty much such a figure as a well-sized puppet might exhibit, if dressed in an extempore suit of woman's clothes cut shorter for the occasion. Remonstrance is quite out of the question. Even the omnipotent dictum of a French milliner, and the oily flattery of a lady's maid, have been tried in vain on Miss Wren. She turned off her shoemaker for unpalatable praise of her little foot, for which, indeed, the famous "glass slipper" of the Fairy Tales would hardly have been small enough; and cashiered a conscientious mantua-maker for offering to deduct a sovereign in the price of a satin cloak in consideration of its shortness. What worse could she have done had the lady of the needle been wholly honest, and deducted two sovereigns, as well she might, from the seven-guinea cloak? I do think she would have brought an action for libel.

She inhabits large houses; sits on great chairs; rides high horses; has a Newfoundland dog for a pet; and drives a huge heavy landau, where she is perched between a tall footman and a fat coachman, and looks, when one catches sight of her,

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something like a minnow between a salmon and a turbot. or a goldfinch between a peacock and a goose. The bigger the thing, the more she affects it: plays on the organ, although the chords are as unreachable to her delicate fingers, as Gulliver found those of his instrument at Brobdignag; paints at an easel so high that she is forced to stand on steps; and professes to read comfortably from no book smaller than a folio, though it is morally certain that she must walk backwards and forwards to compass the page. The slender jessamine hand, written with a crowquill on pink note paper, which some fine ladies cultivate so successfully, is her aversion, her letters are substantial specimens of stationery, written in a huge text hand on thick extra-post paper, and sealed with a coat of arms as big as a crown piece,—which magnificent seal, by the way, depending by a chain that might lock a waggon-wheel, from a watch of her maternal grandfather's, as big as a saucer, she constantly wears about her person.

In flowers her taste is of equal magnitude. Dahlias, sunflowers, hollyhocks, and tree-roses, together with the whole tribe of *majors*, (*minors*, of course, she avoids and detests,) and all those shrubs and creepers whose blossoms are out of reach, are her favourites. She will dangle a bush of rhododendron or azalea in her hand, and wear a magnolia in her bosom for a nosegay. In her love of space, her desire for "ample room and verge enough," she has done her best to convert her pretty place of Wrensnest into a second edition of Timon's Villa, "*Her* pond an ocean, *her* parterre a down," and in her passion for great effects would think no more of moving an oak of a century old from its native forest than I should of transplanting a daisy. Cloud-capt mountains, inaccessible rocks, and the immeasurable ocean, are the only prospects for her; she raves of the stupendous scenery of America, and will certainly some day or other make a journey of pleasure to the Andes or the Cordilleras.

As in nature, so in art, the grand is her standard of ex-

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cellence. Colossal statues and pictures larger than life she delights in; worships Martin, adores Michael Angelo, prefers St. Peter's to the Parthenon, and the Farnese Hercules to the Apollo Belvidere. When she dies, she will desire a pyramid for her mausoleum. The dome of St. Paul's, which served her celebrated namesake, would hardly satisfy her ambition.—But why do I talk of tombs and of namesakes? Am I not just come from the wedding breakfast? and is not "Little Miss Wren" Miss Wren no longer? Even whilst I write, bells are ringing, horses prancing, bridemaids simpering, and wedding-cake travelling nine times through the Baroness Blankenhausen's fairy ring.

The bridegroom is a fair well-conditioned Saxon, six feet three inches high, and broad in proportion, with a superb genealogical tree, quarterings innumerable, and an estate by no means suitable to his dimensions: for the rest, remarkable for nothing except his great turn for silence,* the number of cigars which he puffs away in the course of the day, and two little Marlborough spaniels which he is accustomed to carry about in his coat pockets. I hope he won't put his wife there. Really the temptation will be strong; but the Baron is a

* Persons of the larger size are often very silent. An ingenious friend of mine holds a theory that the desirable quantity of animal spirits is originally distributed pretty equally amongst men; but that it is lost, absorbed, and diluted in people of unusual bulk, and only shines forth in full vigour in those of a smaller frame: as the glass of alcohol, which will powerfully impregnate a pint of water, will be scarcely perceived in a gallon. For instance, (waiving particular examples of which he brought many,) he holds that a company of light infantry would prove far more vivacious than a troop of life-guards; and has no hesitation in asserting that the famous tall regiment of Frederick the Great must have been the dullest part of the whole Prussian army. I do not answer for the truth of his assertion, though my friend makes out a very good case, as your clever theorist seldom fails to do, right or wrong. Indeed I brought Falstaff as a case in point against him. He admitted the mere bulk, the "huge rotundity," and the quantity of animal spirits that distinguished the witty knight, "but then," added he, "I am sure he was short."

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giant of grace, a well-mannered monster; and to judge from the carefulness and delicacy with which he lifted his fair bride over a puddle in the church-yard, to save her white satin shoes, (she protesting all the time against such a display of his gallantry, and declaring that she could have stept over the pool had it been twice as wide,)—to judge from that coup d'essai in husbandship, I see no cause to doubt that he will treat my friend as tenderly and gingerly, as if he were a little girl of six years old, and the fair Philippa his first wax doll.

GOING TO THE RACES.

A MEMORABLE day was the third of last June to Mary and Henrietta Coxe, the young daughters of Simon Coxe the carpenter of Aberleigh, for it was the first day of Ascot Races, and the first time of their going to that celebrated union of sport and fashion. There is no pleasure so great in the eyes of our country damsels as a jaunt to Ascot. In the first place, it is, when you get there, a genuine English amusement, open alike to rich and poor, elegant as an opera, and merry as a fair; in the second, this village of Aberleigh is situate about fourteen miles from the course, just within distance, almost out of distance, so that there is commonly enough of suspense and difficulty—the slight difficulty, the short suspense, which add such zest to pleasure; finally, at Ascot you are sure to see the King, to see him in his graciousness and his dignity, the finest gentleman in Europe, the greatest sovereign of the world. Truly it is nothing extraordinary that his liege subjects should flock to indulge their feelings of loyalty by the sight of such a monarch, and that the announcement of his presence should cover a barren heath with a dense and crowded population of all ranks and all ages, from the duchess to the

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gipsy, from the old man of eighty to the child in its mother's arms.

All people love Ascot Races; but our country lasses love them above all. It is their favourite wedding jaunt, for half our young couples are married in the race week, and one or two matches have seemed to me got up purposely for the occasion; and of all the attentions that can be offered by a lover, a drive to the Races is the most irresistible. In short, so congenial is that gay scene to love, that it is a moot point which are most numerous, the courtships that conclude there in the shape of bridal excursions, or those which begin on that favoured spot in the shape of parties of pleasure; and the delicate experiment called "popping the question," is so often put in practice on the very course itself, that when Robert Hewitt, the young farmer at the Holt, asked Master Coxe's permission to escort his daughters, not only the good carpenter, but his neighbours the blacksmith and the shoemaker, looked on this mark of rustic gallantry as the precursor of a declaration in form; and all the village cried out on Hetta Coxe's extreme good luck, Hetta being supposed, and with some reason, to be the chief object of this attention.

Robert Hewitt was a young farmer of the old school, honest, frugal, and industrious; thrifty, thriving, and likely to thrive; one of a fine yeomanly spirit, not ashamed of his station, and fond of following the habits of his forefathers, sowing his own corn, driving his own team, and occasionally ploughing his own land. As proud, perhaps, of his blunt speech and homely ways as some of his brother farmers of their superior refinement and gentility. Nothing could exceed the scorn with which Robert Hewitt, in his market cart, drawn by his good horse Dobbin, would look down on one neighbour on his hunter, and another in his gig. To the full as proud as any of them was Robert, but in a different way, and perhaps a safer. He piqued himself, like a good Englishman, on wearing a smock frock, smoking his pipe, and hating foreigners, to our inter-

course with whom he was wont to ascribe all the airs and graces, the new fashions, and the effeminacy, which annoyed him in his own countrymen. He hated the French, he detested dandies, and he abhorred fine ladies, fine ways, and finery of any sort. Such was Robert Hewitt.

Henrietta Coxe was a pretty girl of seventeen, and had passed the greater part of her life with an aunt in the next town, who had been a lady's maid in her youth, and had retired thither on a small annuity. To this aunt, who had been dead about a twelvemonth, she was indebted for a name, rather too fine for common wear—I believe she wrote herself Henrietta-Matilda; a large wardrobe, pretty much in the same predicament; an abundant stock of superfine notions, some skill in mantua-making and millinery, and a legacy of a hundred pounds to be paid on her wedding-day. Her beauty was quite in the style of a wax doll: blue eyes, flaxen hair, delicate features, and a pink and white complexion, much resembling that sweet pea which is known by the name of the painted lady. Very pretty she was certainly, with all her airs and graces; and very pretty, in spite of her airs and graces, did Robert Hewitt think her; and love, who delights in contrasts, and has an especial pleasure in oversetting wise resolutions, and bending the haughty self-will of the lords of the creation, was beginning to make strange havoc in the stout yeoman's heart. His operations, too, found a very unintentional coadjutrix in old Mrs. Hewitt, who, taking alarm at her son's frequent visits to the carpenter's shop, unwarily expressed a hope that if her son did intend to marry one of the Coxes, he would have nothing to do with the fine lady, but would choose Mary, the elder sister, a dark-haired, pleasant looking young woman of two-and-twenty, who kept the house as clean as a palace, and was the boast of the village for industry and good humour. Now this unlucky caution gave Robert, who loved his mother, but did not choose to be managed by her, an additional motive for his lurking preference, by piquing

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his self-will; add to which, the little damsel herself, in the absence of other admirers, took visible pleasure in his admiration; so that affairs seemed drawing to a crisis, and the party to Ascot appeared likely to end like other jaunts to the same place, in a wedding. It is true that the invitation, which had been readily and gratefully accepted by her sister, had been received by Miss Hetta with some little demur. "Going to the Races was delightful! but to ride in a cart behind Dobbin was odious. Could not Mr. Hewitt hire a phaeton, or borrow a gig? However, as her sister seemed to wish it, she might perhaps go, if she could find no better conveyance." And with this concession the lover was contented; the more especially as the destined finery was in active preparation. Flounces, fur-belows, and frippery of all descriptions, enough to stock a milliner's shop, did Hetta produce for the adornment of her fair person; and Robert looked on in silence, sometimes thinking how pretty she would look; sometimes, how soon he would put an end to such nonsense when once they were married; and sometimes, how odd a figure he and Dobbin should cut by the side of so much beauty and fashion.

Neither Dobbin nor his master were fated to be so honoured. The evening before the Races there happened to be a revel at Whitley Wood: thither Hetta repaired; and there she had the ill fortune to be introduced to Monsieur Auguste, a young Frenchman, who had lately hired a room at B., where he vended eau de Cologne and French toys and essences, and did himself the honour, as his bills expressed, to cut the hair and the corns of the nobility and gentry of the town and neighbourhood. Monsieur was a dark, sallow, foreign-looking personage, with tremendous whiskers, who looked at once fierce and foppish, was curled and perfumed in a manner that did honour to his double profession, and wore gold rings in his ears and on his fingers, a huge bunch of seals at his side, and a gaudy brooch at his bosom. Small chance had Robert Hewitt against such a rival, especially when, smitten with her

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beauty or her hundred pounds, he devoted himself to Hetta's service, made fine speeches in most bewitching broken English, braved for her sake the barbarities of a country dance, and promised to initiate her into the mysteries of the waltz and the quadrille; and, finally, requested the honour to conduct her in a cabriolet the next day to Ascot Races. Small chance had our poor farmer against such a Monsieur.

The morning arrived, gloomy, showery, and cold, and at the appointed hour up drove the punctual Robert, in a new market cart, painted blue with red wheels, and his heavy but handsome horse Dobbin, (who was indeed upon occasion the fore horse of the team,) as sleek and shining as good feed and good dressing could make him. Up drove Robert with his little sister (a child of eleven years old, who was to form one of the party) sitting at his side; whilst equally punctual, at Master Coxe's door, stood the sisters ready dressed, Mary in a dark gown, a handsome shawl, and a pretty straw bonnet, with a cloth cloak hanging on her arm; Hetta in a flutter of gauze and ribands, pink and green, and yellow and blue, looking like a parrot tulip, or a milliner's doll, or a picture of the fashions in the Lady's Magazine, or like any thing under the sun but an English country girl. Robert looked at her and then at Mary, who was vainly endeavouring to persuade her to put on, or at least to take, a cloak, and thought for once without indignation of his mother's advice; he got out, however, and was preparing to assist them into the cart, when suddenly, to the astonishment of every body but Hetta, for she had said nothing at home of her encounter at the revel, Monsieur Auguste made his appearance in a hired gig of the most wretched description, drawn by an equally miserable jade, alighted at the house and claimed Mademoiselle's promise to do him the honour to accompany him in his cabriolet. The consternation was general. Mary remonstrated with her sister mildly but earnestly; Master Coxe swore she should not go; but Hetta was resolute; and Farmer Hewitt, whose

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first impulse had been to drub the Frenchman, changed his purpose when he saw how willing she was to be carried off. "Let her go," said he, "Monsieur is welcome to her company; for my part, I think they are well matched. It would be a pity to part them." And lifting Mary rapidly into the cart, he drove off at a pace of which Dobbin, to judge from his weight, appeared incapable, and to which that illustrious steed was very little accustomed.

In the mean while Hetta was endeavouring to introduce her new beau to her father, and to reconcile him to her change of escort; and the standers-by, consisting of half the men and boys in the village, were criticising the Frenchman's equipage. "I could shake the old chaise to pieces with one jerk, it's so ramshackle," cried Ned Jones, Master Coxe's foreman. "The wheel will come to pieces long before they get to Ascot," added Sam the apprentice. "The old horse has a spavin in the off fore leg, that's what makes him so lame," said Will Ford the blacksmith. "And he has been down within the month. Look at his knees!" rejoined Jem the carter. "He's blind of an eye," exclaimed one urchin. "He shies," cried another. "The reins are rotten," observed Dick the collar-maker. "The Frenchman can't drive," remarked Jack the drover, coming up to join the crew; "he'd as nearly as possible run foul of my pigs." "He'll certainly overturn her, poor thing," cried one kind friend, as, overcome by her importunities, her father at length consented to her departure. "The chaise will break down," said another. "Break! he'll break her neck," added a third. "They'll be drenched to the skin in this shower," exclaimed a fourth;—and amidst these consoling predictions the happy couple departed.

Robert and Mary, on their side, proceeded for some time in almost total silence! Robert too angry for speech, and Mary feeling herself, however innocent, involved in the consequences of her sister's delinquency; so that little passed beyond Anne Hewitt's delighted remarks on the beauty of the country, and

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the hedge-rows, bright with the young leaves of the oak, and gay with the pearly thorn blossoms and the delicate brier-rose; and her occasional exclamations at the sudden appearance of some tiny wren, or the peculiar interrupted flight of some water-wagtail, as he threw himself forward, then rested for a moment, self-poised in the air, then started on again with an up-and-down motion, like a ball tossed from the hand, keeping by the side of the cart for half a mile or more, as is frequently the way with that sociable bird. Little passed beyond trifles such as these, until Robert turned suddenly round to his companion with the abrupt question: "Pray, Miss Mary, do you like Frenchmen?" "I never was acquainted with any," replied Mary; "but I think I should like Englishmen best. It seems natural to prefer one's own countrymen." "Ay, to be sure!" replied Robert, "to be sure it is! You are a sensible girl, Mary Coxe; and a good girl. It would be well for your sister if she had some of your sense." "Hetta is a good girl, I assure you, Farmer Hewitt; a very good girl," rejoined Mary warmly, "and does not want sense. But only consider how young she is, and her having no mother, and being a little spoilt by my poor aunt, and so pretty, and every body talking nonsense to her, no wonder that she should sometimes be a little wrong, as she was this morning. But I hope that we shall meet her on the course, and that all will go right again. Hetta is a good girl, and will make a good wife." "To a Frenchman," replied Robert, dryly; and the conversation turned to other subjects, and was kept up with cheerfulness and good humour till they reached Ascot.

Anne and Mary enjoyed the Races much. They saw the line of carriages, nine deep—more carriages than they thought ever were built; and the people—more people than they thought the whole world could hold; had a confused view of the horses and a distinct one of the riders' jackets; and Anne, whose notions on the subject of racing had been rather puzzled, so far enlarged her knowledge and improved her mind

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as to comprehend that yellow, crimson, green, and blue, in short, all the colours of the rainbow, were trying which should come first to the winning post: they saw Punch, a puppet show, several peep shows, and the dancing dogs; admired the matchless display of beauty and elegance when the weather allowed the ladies to walk up and down the course; were amused at the bustle and hurry-scurry, when a sudden shower drove them to the shelter of their carriages; saw the Duke of Wellington; had a merry nod from the lively boy, Prince George; and had the honour of sharing, with some thousands of his subjects, a most graceful bow and most gracious smile from his Majesty. In short, they had seen every thing and every body, except Hetta and her beau; and nothing had been wanting to Mary's gratification, but the assurance of her sister's safety; for Mary had that prime qualification for a sight-seer, the habit of thinking much of what she came to see and little of herself. She made light of all inconveniences, covered little Anne (a delicate child) with her own cloak during the showers, and contrived, in spite of Robert's gallant attention to his guest, that Anne should have the best place under the umbrella, and the most tempting portion of the provisions; so that our farmer, by no means wanting in moral taste, was charmed with her cheerfulness, her good humour, and the total absence of vanity and selfishness; and when, on her ascending the cart to return, he caught a glimpse of a pretty foot and ankle, and saw how much exercise and pleasure had heightened her complexion and brightened her hazel eyes, he could not help thinking to himself, "My mother was right. She's ten times handsomer than her sister, and has twenty times more sense,—and, besides, she does not like Frenchmen."

But where could Hetta be? what had become of poor Hetta? This question, which had pressed so frequently on Mary's mind during the Races, became still more painful as they proceeded on their road home, which, leading through

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cross country lanes, far away from the general throng of the visitors, left more leisure for her affectionate fears. They had driven about two miles, and Robert was endeavouring to comfort her with hopes that their horse's lameness had forced them back again, and that her sister would be found safe at Aberleigh, when a sudden turn in the lane discovered a disabled gig, without a horse or driver, in the middle of the road, and a woman seated on a bank by the side of a ditch—a miserable object, tattered, dirty, shivering, drenched, and crying as if her heart would break. Was it, could it be Hetta? Yes, Hetta it was. All the misfortunes that had been severally predicted at their outset had befallen the unfortunate pair. Before they had travelled three miles, their wretched horse had fallen lame in his near fore leg, and had cast the off hind shoe, which, as the blacksmith of the place was gone to the Races, and nobody seemed willing to put himself out of the way to oblige a Frenchman, had nearly stopped them at the beginning of their expedition. At last, however, they met with a man who undertook to shoe their steed, and whose want of skill added a prick to their other calamities; then Monsieur Auguste broke a shaft of the cabriolet by driving against a post, the setting and bandaging of which broken limb made another long delay; then came a pelting shower, during which they were forced to stand under a tree; then they lost their way, and owing to the people of whom Monsieur inquired not understanding his English, and Monsieur not understanding theirs, went full five miles round about; then they arrived at the Chequers public-house, which no effort could induce their horse to pass, so there they stopped perforce to bait and feed; then, when they were getting on as well as could be expected of a horse with three lame legs and a French driver, a waggon came past them, carried away their wheel, threw Monsieur Auguste into the hedge, and lodged Miss Henrietta in the ditch; so now the beau was gone to the next village for assistance, and the belle was waiting his

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return on the bank; and poor Hetta was evidently tired of her fine lover and the manifold misadventures which his unlucky gallantry had brought upon her, and accepted very thankfully the offer which Anne and Mary made, and Robert did not oppose, of taking her into the cart and leaving a line written in pencil on a leaf of Mary's pocket book, to inform Monsieur of her safety. Heartily glad was poor Hetta to find herself behind the good steed Dobbin, under cover of her sister's warm cloak, pitied and comforted and in a fair way to get home. Heartily glad would she have been, too, to have found herself reinstated in the good graces of her old admirer. But of that she saw no sign. Indeed, the good yeoman took some pains to show that, although he bore no malice, his courtship was over. He goes, however, oftener than ever to the carpenter's house; and the gossips of Aberleigh say that this jaunt to Ascot will have its proper and usual catastrophe, a merry wedding; that Robert Hewitt will be the happy bridegroom, but that Hetta Coxe will not be the bride.

THE CHINA JUG.

One of the prettiest rustic dwellings in our pretty neighbourhood, is the picturesque farm-house which stands on the edge of Wokefield Common, so completely in a bottom, that the passengers who traverse the high road see indeed the smoke from the chimneys floating like a vapour over the woody hill which forms the back-ground, but cannot even catch a glimpse of the roof, so high does the turfy common rise above it; whilst so steeply does the ground decline to the door, that it seems as if no animal less accustomed to tread the hill side than a goat or a chamois could venture to descend the narrow footpath which winds round the declivity, and forms the

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nearest way to the village. The cart-track, thridding the mazes of the hills, leads to the house by a far longer but very beautiful road; the smooth fine turf of the common varied by large tufts of furze and broom rising in an abrupt bank on one side, on the other a narrow well-timbered valley, bordered by hanging woods, and terminated by a large sheet of water, close beside which stands the farm, a low irregular cottage snugly thatched, and its different out-buildings, all on the smallest scale, but giving the air of comfort and habitation to the spot that nothing can so thoroughly convey as an English barn-yard with its complement of cows, pigs, horses, chickens, and children.

One part of the way thither is singularly beautiful. It is where a bright and sparkling spring has formed itself into a clear pond in a deep broken hollow by the road side: the bank all around covered with rich grass, and descending in unequal terraces to the pool: whilst on every side around it, and at different heights, stand ten or twelve noble elms, casting their green shadows mixed with the light clouds and the blue summer sky on the calm and glassy water, and giving (especially when the evening sun lights up the little grove, causing the rugged trunks to shine like gold, and the pendent leaves to glitter like the burnished wings of the rose beetle) a sort of pillared and columnar dignity to the scene.

Seldom too would that fountain, famous for the purity and sweetness of its waters, be without some figure suited to the landscape; child, woman, or country girl, leaning from the plank extended over the spring, to fill her pitcher, or returning with it, supported by one arm on her head, recalling all classical and pastoral images, the beautiful sculptures of Greece, the poetry of Homer and of Sophocles, and even more than these, the habits of oriental life, and the Rachels and Rebeccas of Scripture.

Seldom would that spring be without some such figure ascending the turfy steps into the lane, of whom one might

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inquire respecting the sequestered farm-house, whose rose-covered porch was seen so prettily from a turn in the road; and often it would be one of the farmer's children who would answer you; for in spite of the vicinity of the great pond, all the water for domestic use was regularly brought from the Elmin Spring.

Wokefield-Pond Farm was a territory of some thirty acres; one of the "little bargains," as they are called, which once abounded, but are now seldom found, in Berkshire; and at the time to which our story refers, that is to say, about twenty years ago, its inhabitants were amongst the poorest and most industrious people in the country.

George Mearing was the only son of a rich yeoman in the parish, who held this "little bargain" in addition to the manor farm. George was an honest, thoughtless, kind-hearted, good-humoured lad, quite unlike his father, who, shrewd, hard, and money-getting, often regretted his son's deficiency in the qualities by which he had risen in the world, and reserved all his favour and affection for one who possessed them in full perfection,—his only daughter, Martha. Martha was a dozen years older than her brother, with a large bony figure, a visage far from prepossessing, a harsh voice, and a constitutional scold, which, scrupulous in her cleanliness, and vigilant in her economy, was in full activity all day long. She seemed to go about the house for no other purpose than that of finding fault, maundering now at one, and now at another,—her brother, the carters, the odd boy, the maid,—every one, in short, except her father, who, connecting the ideas of scolding and of good housewifery, thought that he gained or at least saved money by the constant exercise of this accomplishment, and listened to her accordingly with great delight and admiration: "her mother," thought he to himself, "was a clever managing woman, and sorry enough was I to lose her; but gracious me, she was nothing to Martha! where she spoke one word, Martha speaks ten."

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The rest of the family heard this eternal din with far less complacency. They agreed, indeed, that she could not help scolding, that it was her way, and that they were all fools to take notice of it; but yet they would flee, one and all, before the outpouring of her wrath, like birds before a thunder shower.

The person on whom the storm fell oftenest and loudest was of course her own immediate subject, the maid; and of the many damsels who had undergone the discipline of Martha's tongue, none was ever more the object of her objurgation, or deserved it less, than Dinah Moore. But Dinah had many sins in her stern mistress's eyes, which would hardly have been accounted such elsewhere. In the first place she was young and pretty, and to youth and beauty Martha had strong objections; then she was somewhat addicted to rustic finery, especially in the article of pink top-knots,—and to rosy ribands Martha had almost as great an aversion as to rosy cheeks; then again the young lass had a spirit, and when unjustly accused would vindicate herself with more wit than prudence, and better-tempered persons than Martha cannot abide that qualification; moreover the little damsel had an irresistible lightness of heart, and a gaiety of temper, which no rebuke could tame, no severity repress; laughter was as natural to her, as chiding to her mistress; all her labours went merrily on; she would sing over the mashing tub, and smile through the washing week, out-singing Martha's scolding, and out-smiling Martha's frowns.

This in itself would have been sufficient cause of offence: but when Martha fancied, and fancied truly, that the pink top-knots, the smiles, and the songs were all aimed at the heart of her brother George, of whom, in her own rough way, she was both fond and proud, the pretty songstress became insupportable: and when George, in despite of her repeated warnings, did actually one fine morning espouse Dinah Moore, causing her in her agitation to let fall an old-fashioned china wash-

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hand basin, the gift of a long-deceased godmother, which, with the jug belonging to it, she valued more than any other of her earthly possessions; no wonder that she made a vow never to speak to her brother whilst she lived, or that, more in resentment than in covetousness, (for Martha Mearing was rather a harsh and violent, than an avaricious woman,) she encouraged her father in his angry resolution of banishing the culprit from his house, and disinheriting him from his property.

Old Farmer Mearing was not, however, a wicked man, although in many respects, a hard one. He did not turn his son out to starve: on the contrary, he settled him in the Pond Farm, with a decent though scanty plenishing,—put twenty pounds in his pocket, and told him that he had nothing more to expect from him, and that he must make his own way in the world as he had done forty years before.

George's heart would have sunk under this denunciation, for he was of a kind but weak and indolent nature, and wholly accustomed to depend on his father, obey his orders, and rely on him for support; but he was sustained by the bolder and firmer spirit of his wife, who, strong, active, lively, and sanguine, finding herself for the first time in her life her own mistress, in possession of a comfortable home, and married to the man of her heart, saw nothing but sunshine before them. Dinah had risen in the world, and George had fallen; and this circumstance, in addition to an original difference of temperament, may sufficiently account for their difference of feeling.

During the first year or two, Dinah's prognostics seemed likely to be verified. George ploughed and sowed and reaped, and she made butter, reared poultry, and fatted pigs: and their industry prospered, and the world went well with the young couple. But a bad harvest, the death of their best cow, the lameness of their most serviceable horse, and more than all, perhaps, the birth of four little girls in four successive years, crippled them sadly, and brought poverty and the fear of poverty to their happy fireside.

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Still, however, Dinah's spirit continued undiminished. Her children, although, to use her own phrase, "of the wrong sort," grew and flourished, as the children of poor people do grow and flourish, one hardly knows how; and by the time that the long-wished-for boy made his appearance in the world, the elder girls had become almost as useful to their father as if they had been "of the right sort" themselves. Never were seen such hardy and handy little elves! They drove the plough, tended the kine, folded the sheep, fed the pigs, worked in the garden, made the hay, hoed the turnips, reaped the corn, hacked the beans, and drove the market-cart to B—— on occasion, and sold the butter, eggs, and poultry as well as their mother could have done.

Strong, active, and serviceable as boys were the little lasses; and pretty withal, though as brown as so many gipsies, and as untrained as wild colts. They had their mother's bright and sparkling countenance, and her gay and sunny temper, a heritage more valuable than house or land,—a gift more precious than ever was bestowed on a favoured princess by beneficent fairy. But the mother's darling was one who bore no resemblance to her either in mind or person, her only son and youngest child Moses, so called after his grandfather, in a lurking hope, which was however disappointed, that the name might propitiate the offended and wealthy yeoman.

Little Moses was a fair, mild, quiet boy, who seemed at first sight far fitter to wear petticoats than any one of his madcap sisters; but there was an occasional expression in his deep grey eye that gave token of sense and spirit, and an unfailing steadiness and diligence about the child that promised to vindicate his mother's partiality. She was determined that Moses should be, to use the country phrase, "a good scholar;" the meaning of which is, by the way, not a little dissimilar from that which the same words bear at Oxford or at Cambridge. Poor Dinah was no "scholar" herself, as the parish register can testify, where her mark stands below George's signature

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in the record of her marriage; and the girls bade fair to emulate their mother's ignorance, Dinah having given to each of the four the half of a year's schooling, upon the principle of ride and tie, little Lucy going one day, and little Patty the next, and so on with the succeeding pair; in this way adroitly educating two children for the price of one, their mother in her secret soul holding it for girls a waste of time. But when Moses came in question the case was altered. He was destined to enjoy the benefit of an entire education, and to imbibe unshared all the learning that the parish pedagogue could bestow. An admission to the Wokefield free-school insured him this advantage, together with the right of wearing the long primitive blue cloth coat and leathern girdle, as well as the blue cap and yellow tassel, by which the boys were distinguished; and by the time he was eight years old, he had made such progress in the arts of writing and ciphering, that he was pronounced by the master to be the most promising pupil in the school.

At this period, misfortunes, greater than they had hitherto known, began to crowd around this family. Old Farmer Mearing died, leaving all his property to Martha; and George, a broken-hearted toil-worn man, who had been only supported in his vain efforts to make head against ill-fortune by the hope of his father's at last relenting, followed him to the grave in less than two months. Debt and difficulty beset the widow, and even her health and spirits began to fail. Her only resource seemed to be to leave her pleasant home, give up every thing to the creditors, get her girls out to service, and try to maintain herself and Moses by washing or charing, or whatever work her failing strength would allow her to perform.

Martha, or, as she was now called, Mrs. Martha, lived on in lonely and apparently comfortless affluence at the Manor Farm. She had taken no notice of Dinah's humble supplications, sent injudiciously by Patty, a girl whose dark and sparkling beauty exactly resembled what her mother had been before

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her unfortunate marriage; but on Moses, so like his father, she had been seen to gaze wistfully and tenderly, when the little procession of charity boys passed her on their way to church; though on finding herself observed, or perhaps on detecting herself in such an indulgence, the softened eye was immediately withdrawn, and the stern spirit seemed to gather itself into a resolution only the stronger for its momentary weakness.

Mrs. Martha, now long past the middle of life, and a confirmed old maid, had imbibed a few of the habits and peculiarities which are supposed, and perhaps justly, to characterize that condition. Amongst other things she had a particular fancy for the water from the Elmin spring, and could not relish her temperate supper if washed down by any other beverage; and she was accustomed to fetch it herself in the identical china jug, the present of her godmother, the basin belonging to which she had broken from the shock she underwent when hearing of George's wedding. It is even possible, so much are we the creatures of association, that the constant sight of this favourite piece of porcelain, which was really of very curious and beautiful Nankin china, might, by perpetually reminding her of her loss, and the occasion, serve to confirm her inveterate aversion to poor George and his family.

However this might be, it chanced that one summer evening Mrs. Martha sallied forth to fetch the sparkling draught from the Elmin spring. She filled her jug as usual, but much rain had fallen, and the dame, no longer so active as she had been, slipped when about to re-ascend the bank with her burthen, and found herself compelled either to throw herself forward and grasp the trunk of the nearest tree, to the imminent peril of her china jug, of which she was compelled to let go, or to slide back to the already tottering and slippery plank, at the risk, almost the certainty, of plunging head foremost into the water. If Mrs. Martha had been asked, on level ground and out of danger, whether she preferred to be soused in her own

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person, or to break her china jug, she would, most undoubtedly, theoretically have chosen the ducking; but theory and practice are different matters, and following the instinct of self-preservation, she let the dear mug go, and clung to the tree.

As soon as she was perfectly safe she began to lament, in her usual vituperative strain, over her irreparable loss, scolding the tottering plank and the slippery bank, and finally, there being no one else to bear the blame, her own heedless haste, which had cost her the commodity she valued most in the world. Swinging herself round, however, still supported by the tree, she had the satisfaction to perceive that the dear jug was not yet either sunken or broken. It rested most precariously on a tuft of bulrushes towards the centre of the pool, in instant danger of both these calamities, and, indeed, appeared to her to be visibly sinking under its own weight. What could she do? She could never reach it; and whilst she went to summon assistance, the precious porcelain would vanish. What could she do?

Just as she was asking herself this question, she had the satisfaction to hear footsteps in the lane. She called; and a small voice was heard singing, and the little man Moses, with his satchel at his back, made his appearance, returning from school. He had not heard her, and she would not call him—not even to preserve her china treasure. Moses, however, saw the dilemma, and pausing only to pull off his coat, plunged into the water, to rescue the sinking cup.

The summer had been wet, and the pool was unusually high, and Mrs. Martha, startled to perceive that he was almost immediately beyond his depth, called to him earnestly and vehemently to return. The resolute boy, however, accustomed from infancy to dabble like the young water-fowl amidst the sedges and islets of the great pond, was not to be frightened by the puny waters of the Elmin spring. He reached, though at some peril, the tuft of bulrushes—brought the jug triumph-

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antly to land—washed it—filled it at the fountain-head, and finally offered it, with his own sweet and gracious smile, to Mrs. Martha. And she—oh! what had she not suffered during the last few moments, whilst the poor orphan—her brother George's only boy, was risking his life to preserve for her a paltry bit of earthenware! What had she not felt during those few but long moments! Her woman's heart melted within her; and instead of seizing the precious porcelain, she caught the dripping boy in her arms—half-smothered him with kisses, and vowed that her home should be his home, and her fortune his fortune.

And she kept her word,—she provided amply and kindly for Dinah and her daughters; but Moses is her heir, and he lives at the Manor Farm, and is married to the prettiest woman in the country; and Mrs. Martha has betaken herself to Pond-side, with a temper so much ameliorated, that the good farmer declares the greatest risk his children run is, of being spoilt by aunt Martha:—one in particular, her godson, who has inherited the name and the favour of his father, and is her own especial little Moses.

LOUISA.

I HAVE said, in talking of my fair friend, Little Miss Wren—the Baroness Blankenhausen, I beg her pardon, how one forgets these new-married ladies' new titles!—I have said that this was a year fruitful in white gloves, silver favours, and bridecake; and since that event weddings and tidings of weddings have poured in faster than ever. The last of these conjunctions is to me by far the most astonishing—so astonishing that although assisting at the ceremony I can hardly believe that it has taken place; but am still experiencing the

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same sort of surprise, that one feels at the death of an invalid of ten years' standing, or the termination of a twenty years' chancery suit.

It was on Monday last that I had the double pleasure of attending the nuptials of an old friend, and of giving in my resignation of the post of confidante, which I had filled with great credit and honour for twenty years and upwards. A married woman no longer needs the sympathy and consolation of a listening and pitying love-friend. Her story, according to all the laws of romance, is fairly over. So is my occupation. I shall miss it at first, just as one living in a churchyard would miss an entire cessation of those bells, which yet from habit he scarcely heard. I shall miss poor Louisa's sighs and blushes, written or spoken, especially when the post comes in, and she will miss me, perhaps, the most of the two; for I cannot help thinking that by the time the honeymoon is over, the necessity for a discreet confidante may be as pressing as ever. I cannot disguise from myself, that a damsel who has been used to fall in love with a new object at the end of every two or three months for the last twenty years, more or less, may, from mere habit, and without the slightest intentional infraction of the nuptial vow, fairly forget that she is married, and relapse into her old custom; more especially as her husband appears to be the only young man she has ever known with whom she has never even fancied herself in love.

Louisa L. and myself were old schoolfellows. Her father is a West-Indian planter of some property, who, having lost many children in the pestiferous climate of Barbadoes, did not choose to carry thither his only remaining daughter, and left her at school during a long residence on his estate, not as a parlour-boarder, but as a common pupil. She was a fine-looking girl with a tall showy figure, and a face amazingly like what one sees in those old family portraits, which bear so great a resemblance to each other, whatever they may do to the originals. Like them our heroine was distinguished by

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regular features, a high narrow forehead, black sleepy eyes, long dark hair, a clear complexion, and a general languishing composure of aspect.

Now this sounds like the description of a beautiful woman as well as of a beautiful picture; and so it would be, only that unluckily, whilst content that the portrait should keep one look and one expression, we are apt to expect the real woman to vary occasionally, and are so unreasonable as to be disappointed when we find her countenance, however handsome, (for the handsomer it is the more we expect from it,) fixed in the same mould of comely silliness from year's end to year's end. In such a case almost any change would be felt as a relief, and a little ugliness would tell exceedingly.

Her conversation was quite in keeping with her style of person; much of the sort (making due allowance for the interval of a century) that one might expect from Sir Peter Lely's portrait of one's great grandmother seated on a bank, attired in a robe of blue satin, with a crook in her hand, a rose in her bosom, and two or three sheep at her feet.

Simile apart, Louisa was a thoroughly well-meaning young woman, with little wit, and much good-nature, with a mind no more adapted to contain knowledge than a sieve to hold water, and a capacity of unlearning, a faculty of forgetting, most happily suited to the double and triple course of instruction which her father's protracted absence had doomed her to undergo. She had been in the first class for five years to my certain knowledge; there I found her and there I left her, going over the same ground with each successive set, and regularly overtaken and outstripped by every girl of common talent. The only thing in which she ever made any real proficiency was music; by dint of incredible application she sang tolerably, played well on the piano, and better on the harp. But she had no genuine love even for that; and began to weary, as well she might, of her incessant practice, and her interminable education. The chief effect of this natural weariness was a strong desire to be married, the only proba-

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ble mode of release that occurred to her; for of her father's return she and every one had begun to despair. How to carry this wish into effect perplexed her not a little. If she had been blest with a manœuvring mamma, indeed, the business might soon have been done. But poor Louisa was not so lucky. She had only an old bachelor uncle, and two maiden aunts, who, quite content to see to her comforts in a kind, quiet way, to have her at home in the holidays, to keep her well dressed and well supplied with fruit and pocket-money, continued to think of her as a mere school-girl, and never dreamed of the grand object by which her whole soul was engrossed. So that the gentle damsel, left entirely to the resources of her own genius, could devise no better plan than to fix her thoughts and attention, fall in love, as she called and perhaps thought it, with every man of suitable station who happened to fall in her way. The number of these successive, or alternate, or simultaneous preferences—for often she had two beaux who were laid aside and taken up in a sort of see-saw, as either happened to cross her path, and sometimes she had literally two at once—was really astonishing. So was her impartiality. Rich or poor, old or young, from seventeen to seventy, nothing came amiss. Equally amazing was the exceedingly small encouragement upon which her fancy could work; to dance with her, to sit next her at dinner, to ask her to play, one visit, one compliment, a look, a word, or half a word, was enough to send her sighing through the house, singing tender airs, and reading novels and love ditties. The celebrated ballad in which Cowley gives a list of his mistresses

—the "Chronicle," as he calls it—was but a type of the bead-roll of names that might have been strung up from her fancies. The common duration of a fit was about a month or six weeks, sometimes more, sometimes less, as one love-wedge drove out another; but generally the "decline and fall" of these attachments (I believe that is the phrase) began at the month's end.

It was astonishing how well these little dramas were gotten up: any body not in the secret would have thought her really a tender inamorata, she had so many pretty sentimentalities, would wear nothing but the favourite's favourite colour, or sigh out her soul over his favourite song, or hoard his notes or visiting tickets in her bosom. One of her vagaries cost me a bad cold. The reigning swain happened to be a German count, who, talking somewhat fantastically of the stars, expressed a sort of superstitious devotion to the beautiful constellation Orion; he could not sleep, he said, till he had gazed on it. Now, our luckless damsel took this for a sort of covert assignation, a tender rendezvous of looks and thoughts, like the famous story of the two lovers in the Spectator; and the sky prospect from her apartment being rather limited, she used, to my unspeakable annoyance, to come star-gazing to mine. This *accès*, being encouraged by more attention than usual on the part of the gentleman—or rather she being unused to foreign manners, and mistaking the continental courtesy to a fair lady for a particular devotion,—lasted three whole months. Of course she fell into other mistakes besides the general one of fancying all men in love with her. One winter, for instance, she fancied that a sickly gentleman, who used to sun himself on the pavement on our side of the square, walked there to listen to her music; so she obligingly moved her harp close to an open window, (in December! N. B. she caught as bad a cold by these noon-day serenades, as ever her midnight assignation with the belted Orion gave me,) and played and sang during the whole time of his promenade. A little while after we discovered that the poor gentleman was deaf.

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Nor were her own mistakes, though they were bad enough, the worst she had to encounter. A propensity so ridiculous could not escape undetected amongst such a tribe of tricksy and mischievous spirits; nor could all the real regard attracted by the fair Louisa's many good qualities save her from the mal-practices of these little mockers. It was such fun to set her whirligig heart a-spinning, to give her a fresh object—sometimes a venerable grandfather, sometimes a school-boy brother, sometimes a married cousin—any lover would answer her purpose, and the more absurd or impossible, the better for ours.

I will, however, do myself the justice to say, that partly from compassion, and partly from vanity at being elected to the post of confidante, I was not by many degrees so guilty as many of my compeers. To be sure one Valentine, a piece of original poetry, with about as much sense and meaning as the famous love-song by a person of quality, and a few flowery billets to match, purporting to come from the same quarter,—that Valentine! I must plead guilty to that Valentine—but that was a venial offence, and besides she never found it out. So when I left school, and even when six months after her father unexpectedly returned and took her to reside with him in a country town, I still continued the favoured depository of her secrets and her sighs.

We lived in distant counties, and met so seldom, that our intercourse was almost entirely epistolary. Intercourse did I say? My share of the correspondence, or of the dialogue, was little better than what a confidante on the French stage sustains with the *belle princesse,* from whom she is obliged to hear a hundred-times-told-tale. I was a mere woman of straw—a thing to direct to. She never cared for answers, luckily for me; for at first, whilst my young civility and conscientious sense of the duties of a polite letter-writer instigated me to reply point by point to her epistles, such blunders used to ensue as are sometimes produced in a game of cross purposes—a perpetual jostling of hopes and fears; condolence

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out of season; congratulation mistimed; praise misapplied; eternal confusion; never-ending mistakes. So, further than half a dozen unmeaning affectionate words, I left off writing at all, perhaps with the lurking hope that she would follow my example. No such thing. The vent was necessary—I was the safety-valve to her heart, by which dangerous explosions were prevented. On she wrote—and oh such letters! crossed and recrossed, and in such a hand! so pretty and so unreadable! Straight and far apart, with long tails meeting each other, and the shorter letters all alike, all m's and n's.* In vain did I remonstrate against this fashionable but barbarous calligraphy, above all against the iniquitous chequer work; on she went from bad to worse, till at last, to my great comfort, her letters became altogether illegible, and my conscience was absolved from the necessity of even trying to read them. A frank made no difference; she went on with her double crossing, only there was double the quantity. Any thing like a regular perusal of these precious epistles was entirely out of the question; and yet I used to get at the meaning of most of them in the process of folding and unfolding, just as one sometimes catches the substance of an unreadable book by the mere act of cutting open the leaves. I knew her so well, that I could trace by a catch-word the progress of her history, and the particular object of her present regard —how she was herself in love with a lord, and how accusing a presumptuous linen-draper of being enamoured of her; how she had a young baronet at her feet, and how she could talk of nothing but an itinerant musician. Twice had she called on me to fulfil an old promise of attending her to the altar; and once, (I was young and silly then myself,) once I had been so far taken in as actually to prepare a wedding suit. Of course, when the final summons came, I was utterly in-

* Of all the varieties of bad writing, this, which looks at first sight quite plain, whilst to decipher it would puzzle an Œdipus, is the most provoking.

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credulous. It was something like the fable of the shepherd's boy and the wolf; not a soul believed her, till the news arrived in a regular authentic document—a letter from her father—a worthy matter-of-fact man, whom poor Louisa's vagaries had actually kept in purgatory,—to mine, who also held the fair damsel for mad. Mr. S. mentioned his intended son-in-law as belonging to the medical profession; and on looking back to Louisa's letters, which, under the new stimulus of curiosity, as to the approaching *denouement*, we contrived to decipher, we discovered that for upwards of two months Louisa had been deeply smitten with a young physician newly arrived at L—, whom she called by the name of Henry, and of whose fine tall person, as well as his dark and manly beauty, she gave a most flaming description. This, of course, was the gentleman. I hastened to repair my fault and prepare my dresses; wrote a letter of congratulation, packed my trunk, and set off. Imagine my astonishment, on arriving at L—, to find Louisa *tête-à-tête* with a little fair lad of eighteen or twenty, the head and shoulders shorter than herself, soft, delicate, and lady-like—the very image of one of Beaumont and Fletcher's girls, who dress themselves in boys' clothes for love—and to be introduced to him as Mr. Peter Sharp, surgeon, the happy *futur* of Miss Louisa! I was never in so much danger of laughing in my life.

I gathered, however, from her admissions, and her father's more rational account, that whilst our fair friend was, according to the vulgar phrase, "setting her cap" at the handsome physician, the young surgeon, who had just finished his education by walking the hospitals, returned to L—, was taken into partnership by his father, and advised by his friends to look about for a wife as a necessary appendage to his profession—perhaps he might also be advised as to the lady, for Louisa has a pretty fortune for a country apothecary. However that might be, he began, as he assures me, to pay suit and service; whilst the fair object of his devotion, whose

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heart, or rather whose fancy, was completely pre-occupied, and who thought of Mr. Peter, if she thought of him at all, as a mere boy, entirely overlooked himself and his attentions —they being perhaps the only attentions of a young man which she ever did overlook in the whole course of her life. She confesses that the first entire sentence she ever heard him utter was the offer—the actual offer of heart and hand. Most ladies in her situation would have been a little posed; but Louisa is not a woman to be taken unawares: she has thought too much on the subject; has too well-founded a reliance on her own changeability: besides, she had set her heart on the "pomp, pride, and circumstance of glorious" bridal; the wedding was the thing—the wedding-day—the man was of little importance; Peter might do as well as Henry—so she said yes, and all was settled.

And a very splendid wedding it was; really, for those who like such things, almost worth the troubles and anxieties of a twenty years' love. The whole *cortège*, horses, carriages, friends, and bridemaids, down to the very breakfast cake and gloves, were according to the most approved usage of books or of life. It might have made a fine conclusion to a novel; it did make a splendid paragraph in a newspaper. Every detail was correct, except one—nobody cried. That did vex her. That was an omission. She tried hard to repair it herself, and flourished her cambric handerchief; but not a tear could she shed; neither could we, the bridemaidens, nor the father, nor the nuptial father, nor the clergyman, nor the clerk —nobody cried. The bridegroom came nearest—he, the only one who ought not to cry; but luckily he became sensible that it would be a breach of etiquette, and turned the involuntary emotion into a smile. All else went well. May the omen be auspicious, and tears, and the source of tears, keep far away from the kind and gentle Louisa!

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THE ELECTION.

A FEW years back, a gentleman of the name of Danby came to reside in a small decayed borough town, not situate in our parts, and whether in Wiltshire or Cornwall matters not to our story, although to one of those counties the aforesaid town probably belonged, being what is called a close borough, the joint property of two noble families. Mr. Danby was evidently a man of large fortune, and that fortune as evidently acquired in trade,—indeed he made no more secret of the latter circumstance than of the former. He built himself a large, square, red house, equally ugly and commodious, just without the town; walled in a couple of acres of ground for a kitchen garden; kept a heavy one-horse chaise, a stout pony, and a brace of greyhounds; and having furnished his house solidly and handsomely, and arranged his domestic affairs to his heart's content, began to look about amongst his neighbours; scraped acquaintance with the lawyer, the apothecary, and the principal tradesmen; subscribed to the reading room and the billiard room; became a member of the bowling green and the cricket club; and took as lively an interest in the affairs of his new residence, as if he had been born and bred in the borough.

Now this interest, however agreeable to himself, was by no means equally conducive to the quiet and comfort of the place. Mr. Danby was a little, square, dark man, with a cocked-up nose, a good-humoured, but very knowing smile, a pair of keen black eyes, a loud voluble speech, and a prodigious activity both of mind and body. His very look betokened his character,—and that character was one not uncommon among the middle ranks of Englishmen. In short, besides being, as he often boasted, a downright John Bull, the gentleman was

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a reformer, zealous and uncompromising as ever attended a dinner at the Crown and Anchor, or made an harangue in Palace-yard. He read Cobbett; had his own scheme for the redemption of tithes; and a plan (which, not understanding, I am sorry I cannot undertake to explain) for clearing off the national debt without loss or injury to any body.

Besides these great matters, which may rather be termed the theorique than the practique of reform, and which are at least perfectly inoffensive, Mr. Danby condescended to smaller and more worrying observances; and was, indeed, so strict and jealous a guardian of the purity of the corporation, and the incorruptibility of the vestry, that an alderman could not wag a finger, or a churchwarden stir a foot, without being called to account by this vigilant defender of the rights, liberties, and purses of the people. He was, beyond a doubt, the most troublesome man in the parish—and that is a wide word. In the matter of reports and inquiries, Mr. Hume was but a type of him. He would mingle economy with a parish dinner, and talk of retrenchment at the mayor's feast; brought an action, under the turnpike act, against the clerk and treasurer of the commissioners of the road; commenced a suit in chancery with the trustees of the charity school; and finally, threatened to open the borough—that is to say, to support any candidate who should offer to oppose the nominees of the two great families, the one whig and the other tory, who now possessed the two seats in parliament as quietly as their own hereditary estates:—a threat which recent instances of successful opposition in other places rendered not a little formidable to the noble owners.

What added considerably to the troublesome nature of Mr. Danby's inquisitions was, the general cleverness, ability, and information of the individual. He was not a man of classical education, and knew little of books; but with *things* he was especially conversant. Although very certain that Mr. Danby had been in business, nobody could guess what that business

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had been. None came amiss to him. He handled the rule and the yard with equal dexterity; astonished the butcher by his insight into the mysteries of fattening and dealing, and the grocer by his familiarity with the sugar and coffee markets; disentangled the perplexities of the confused mass of figures in the parish books with the dexterity of a sworn accomptant; and was so great upon points of law, so ready and accurate in quoting reports, cases, and precedents, that he would certainly have passed for a retired attorney, but for the zeal and alertness with which, at his own expense, he was apt to rush into lawsuits.

With so remarkable a genius for turmoil, it is not to be doubted that Mr. Danby, in spite of many excellent and sterling qualities, succeeded in drawing upon himself no small degree of odium. The whole corporation were officially his enemies; but his principal opponent, or rather the person whom he considered as his principal opponent, was Mr. Cardonnel, the rector of the parish, who, besides several disputes pending between them, (one especially respecting the proper situation of the church-organ, the placing of which harmonious instrument kept the whole town in discord for a twelvemonth,) was married to the Lady Elizabeth, sister of the Earl of B., one of the patrons of the borough; and being, as well as his wife, of a very popular and amiable character, was justly regarded by Mr. Danby as one of the chief obstacles to his projected reform.

Whilst, however, our reformer was, from the most patriotic motives, doing his best or his worst to dislike Mr. Cardonnel, events of a very different nature were gradually operating to bring them together. Mr. Danby's family consisted of his wife,—a quiet lady-like woman, with very ill health, who did little else than walk from her bed to her sofa, eat water gruel, and drink soda water,—and of an only daughter, who was, in a word, the very apple of her father's eye.

Rose Danby was indeed a daughter of whom any father

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might have been proud. Of middle height and exquisite symmetry, with a rich, dark, glowing complexion, a profusion of glossy, curling, raven hair, large affectionate black eyes, and a countenance at once so sweet and so spirited, that her ready smile played over her face like a sunbeam. Her temper and understanding were in exact keeping with such a countenance—playful, gentle, clever, and kind; and her accomplishments and acquirements of the very highest order. When her father entered on his new residence, she had just completed her fifteenth year; and he, unable longer to dispense with the pleasure of her society, took her from the excellent school near London, at which she had hitherto been placed, and determined that her education should be finished by masters at home.

It so happened, that this little town contained one celebrated artist, a professor of dancing, who kept a weekly academy for young ladies, which was attended by half the families of gentility in the county. M. Le Grand (for the dancing master was a little lively Frenchman) was delighted with Rose. He declared that she was his best pupil, his very best, the best that ever he had in his life. "Mais voyez, donc, Monsieur!" said he one day to her father, who would have scorned to know the French for "How d'ye do;"—"Voyez, comme elle met de l'aplomb, de la force, de la netteté, dans ses entrechats! Qu'elle est leste, et légère, et petrie de graces, la petite!" And Mr. Danby, comprehending only that the artist was praising his darling, swore that Monsieur was a good fellow, and returned the compliment, after the English fashion, by sending him a haunch of venison the next day.

But M. Le Grand was not the only admirer whom Rose met with at the dancing school.

It chanced that Mr. Cardonnel also had an only daughter, a young person about the same age, bringing up under the eye of her mother, and a constant attendant at the professor's academy. The two girls, nearly of a height and both good

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dancers, were placed together as partners; and being almost equally prepossessing in person and manner, (for Mary Cardonnel was a sweet, delicate, fair creature, whose mild blue eyes seemed appealing to the kindness of every one they looked upon,) took an immediate and lasting fancy to each other; shook hands at meeting and parting, smiled whenever their glances chanced to encounter, and soon began to exchange a few kind and hurried words in the pauses of the dance, and to hold more continuous chat at the conclusion. And Lady Elizabeth, almost as much charmed with Rose as her daughter, seeing in the lovely little girl every thing to like, and nothing to disapprove, encouraged and joined in the acquaintance; attended with a motherly care to her cloaking and shawling; took her home in her own carriage when it rained; and finally waylaid Mr. Danby, who always came himself to fetch his darling, and with her bland and gracious smile requested the pleasure of Miss Danby's company to a party of young people, which she was about to give on the occasion of her daughter's birthday. I am afraid that our sturdy reformer was going to say, No!—But Rose's "Oh, papa!" was irresistible; and to the party she went.

After this the young people became every day more intimate. Lady Elizabeth waited on Mrs. Danby, and Mrs. Danby returned the call; but her state of health precluded visiting, and her husband, who piqued himself on firmness and consistency, contrived, though with some violence to his natural kindness of temper, to evade the friendly advances and invitations of the rector.

The two girls, however, saw one another almost every day. It was a friendship like that of Rosalind and Celia, whom, by the way, they severally resembled in temper and character—Rose having much of the brilliant gaiety of the one fair cousin, and Mary the softer and gentler charm of the other. They rode, walked, and sang together; were never happy asunder; played the same music; read the same books; dressed alike;

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worked for each other; and interchanged their own little property of trinkets and flowers, with a generosity that seemed only emulous which should give most.

At first, Mr. Danby was a little jealous of Rose's partiality to the rectory; but she was so fond of him, so attentive to his pleasures, that he could not find in his heart to check hers: and when, after a long and dangerous illness, with which the always delicate Mary was affected, Mr. Cardonnel went to him, and with tears streaming down his cheeks, told him he believed that under Providence he owed his daughter's life to Rose's unwearying care, the father's heart was fairly vanquished; he wrung the good rector's hand, and never grumbled at her long visits again. Lady Elizabeth, also, had her share in producing this change of feeling, by presenting him in return for innumerable baskets of peaches and melons, and hothouse grapes, (in the culture of which he was curious,) with a portrait of Rose, drawn by herself—a strong and beautiful likeness, with his own favourite greyhound at her feet; a picture which he would not have exchanged for "The Transfiguration."

Perhaps, too, consistent as he thought himself, he was not without an unconscious respect for the birth and station which he affected to despise; and was, at least, as proud of the admiration which his daughter excited in those privileged circles, as of the sturdy independence which he exhibited by keeping aloof from them in his own person. Certain it is, that his spirit of reformation insensibly relaxed, particularly towards the rector; and that he not only ceded the contested point of the organ, but presented a splendid set of pulpit hangings to the church itself.

Time wore on; Rose had refused half the offers of gentility in the town and neighbourhood; her heart appeared to be invulnerable. Her less affluent and less brilliant friend was generally understood (and as Rose, on hearing the report, did not contradict it, the rumour passed for certainty) to be en-

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gaged to a nephew of her mother's, Sir William Frampton, a young gentleman of splendid fortune, who had lately passed much time at his fine place in the neighbourhood.

Time wore on; and Rose was now nineteen, when an event occurred which threatened a grievous interruption to her happiness. The Earl of B.'s member died; his nephew, Sir William Frampton, supported by his uncle's powerful interest, offered himself for the borough; an independent candidate started at the same time; and Mr. Danby found himself compelled, by his vaunted consistency, to insist on his daughter's renouncing her visits to the rectory, at least until after the termination of the election. Rose wept and pleaded, pleaded and wept in vain. Her father was obdurate; and she, after writing a most affectionate note to Mary Cardonnel, retired to her own room in very bad spirits, and, perhaps for the first time in her life, in very bad humour.

About half an hour afterwards, Sir William Frampton and Mr. Cardonnel called at the red house.

"We are come, Mr. Danby," said the rector, "to solicit your interest"—

"Nay, nay, my good friend," returned the reformer—"you know that my interest is promised, and that I cannot with any consistency"—

"To solicit your interest with Rose"—resumed his reverence.

"With Rose!" interrupted Mr. Danby.

"Ay—for the gift of her heart and hand,—that being, I believe, the suffrage which my good nephew here is most anxious to secure," rejoined Mr. Cardonnel.

"With Rose!" again ejaculated Mr. Danby: "Why I thought that your daughter"—

"The gipsy has not told you, then!" replied the rector. "Why William and she have been playing the parts of Romeo and Juliet for these six months past."

"My Rose!" again exclaimed Mr. Danby. "Why Rose! Rose! I say!" and the astonished father rushed out of the

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room, and returned the next minute, holding the blushing girl by the arm.

"Rose, do you love this young man?"

"Oh, papa!" said Rose.

"Will you marry him?"

"Oh, papa!"

"Do you wish me to tell him that you will not marry him?"

To this question Rose returned no answer; she only blushed the deeper, and looked down with a half smile.

"Take her, then," resumed Mr. Danby; "I see the girl loves you. I can't vote for you, though, for I've promised, and you know, my good Sir, that an honest man's word"—

"I don't want your vote, my dear Sir," interrupted Sir William Frampton; "I don't ask for your vote, although the loss of it may cost me my seat, and my uncle his borough. This is the election that I care about; the only election worth caring about—Is it not, my own sweet Rose?—the election of which the object lasts for life, and the result is happiness. That's the election worth caring about—Is it not, mine own Rose?"

And Rose blushed an affirmative; and Mr. Danby shook his intended son-in-law's hand, until he almost wrung it off, repeating at every moment—"I can't vote for you, for a man must be consistent; but you're the best fellow in the world, and you shall have my Rose. And Rose will be a great lady," continued the delighted father;—"my little Rose will be a great lady after all!"

A CASTLE IN THE AIR.

"CAN any one tell me of a house to be let hereabouts," asked I, this afternoon, coming into the room, with an open letter

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in my hand, and an unusual animation of feeling and of manner. "Our friends, the Camdens, want to live amongst us again, and have commissioned me to make inquiries for a residence."

This announcement, as I expected, gave general delight; for Mr. Camden is the most excellent and most agreeable person under the sun, except his wife, who is even more amiable than her amiable husband: to regain such neighbours was felt to be an universal benefit, more especially to us who were so happy as to call them friends. My own interest in the house question was participated by all around me, and the usual enumeration of vacant mansions, and the several objections to each (for where ever was a vacant mansion without its objection?) began with zeal and rapidity.

"Cranley Hall," said one.

"Too large!"

"Hinton Park?"

"Too much land."

"The White House at Hannonby—the Belvidere, as the late people called it?"

"What! Is that flourishing establishment done up? But Hannonby is too far off—ten miles at least."

"Queen's-bridge Cottage?"

"Ay, that sweet place would have suited exactly, but it's let. The Browns took it only yesterday."

"Sydenham Court?"

"That might have done too, but it is not in the market. The Smiths intend to stay."

"Lanton Abbey?"

"Too low; grievously damp."

By this time, however, we had arrived at the end of our list; nobody could remember another place to be let, or likely to be let, and confessing ourselves too fastidious, we went again over our catalogue raisonné with expectations much sobered, and objections much modified, and were beginning to find out that Cranley Hall was not so very large, nor

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Lanton Abbey so exceedingly damp, when one of our party exclaimed suddenly, "We never thought of Hatherden Hill! surely that is small enough and dry enough!" and it being immediately recollected that Hatherden was only a mile off, we lost sight of all faults in this great recommendation, and wrote immediately to the lawyer who had the charge of letting the place, whilst I myself and my most efficient assistant sallied forth to survey it on the instant.

It was a bright cool afternoon about the middle of August, and we proceeded in high spirits towards our destination, talking, as we went, of the excellence and agreeableness of our delightful friends, and anticipating the high intellectual pleasure, the gratification to the taste and the affections, which our renewed intercourse with persons so accomplished and so amiable could not fail to afford; both agreeing that Hatherden was the very place we wanted, the very situation, the very distance, the very size. In agreeing with me, however, my companion could not help reminding me rather maliciously how very much, in our late worthy neighbours', the Norrises, time, I had been used to hate and shun this paragon of places; how frequently I had declared Hatherden too distant for a walk, and too near for a drive; how constantly I had complained of fatigue in mounting the hill, and of cold in crossing the common; and how, finally, my half-yearly visits of civility had dwindled first into annual, then into biennial calls, and would doubtless have extended themselves into triennial marks of remembrance, if our neighbours had but remained long enough. "To be sure," added he, recollecting, probably, how he, with his stricter sense of politeness, used to stave off a call for a month together, taking shame to himself every evening for his neglect, retaining "at once the conscience and the sin!" "To be sure, Norris was a sad bore! We shall find the hill easier to climb when the Camdens live on the top of it." An observation to which I assented most heartily.

On we went gaily; just pausing to admire Master Keep,

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the shoemaker's farming, who having a bit of garden-ground to spare, sowed it with wheat instead of planting it with potatoes, and is now, aided by his lame apprentice, very literally carrying his crop. I fancy they mean to thresh their corn in the woodhouse, at least there they are depositing the sheaves. The produce may amount to four bushels. My companion, a better judge, says to three; and it has cost the new farmer two superb scarecrows, and gunpowder enough for a review, to keep off the sparrows. Well, it has been amusement and variety, however! and gives him an interest in the agricultural corner of the county newspaper. Master Keep is well to do in the world, and can afford himself such a diversion. For my part, I like these little experiments, even if they be not over gainful. They show enterprise: a shoemaker of less genius would never have got beyond a crop of turnips.

On we went—down the lane, over the bridge, up the hill—for there really is a hill, and one of some steepness for Berkshire, and across the common, once so dreary, but now bright and glittering, under the double influence of an August sun, and our own good spirits, until we were stopped by the gate of the lawn, which was of course locked, and obliged to wait until a boy should summon the old woman who had charge of the house, and who was now at work in a neighbouring harvest-field, to give us entrance.

Boys in plenty were there. The fine blackheaded lad, George Ropley—who, with his olive complexion, his bright dark eyes, and his keen intelligent features, looks so Italian, but who is yet in all his ways so thoroughly and genially English—had been gathering in his father's crop of apples, and was amusing himself with tossing some twenty amongst as many urchins of either sex who had collected round him, to partake of the fruit and the sport. There he stood tossing the ripe ruddy apples; some high in the air for a catch, some low amongst the bushes for a hunt; some one way, some another, puzzling and perplexing the rogues, by taking care

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that none should go appleless in the midst of his fun. And what fun it was to them all, thrower and catchers! What infinite delight! How they laughed and shouted, and tumbled and ran! How they watched every motion of George Ropley's hand; the boys and the girls, and the "toddling wee things," of whom one could not distinctly make out whether they were the one or the other! And how often was that hand tossed up empty, flinging nothing, in order to cheat the wary watchers! —Now he threw an apple into the midst of the group, and what a scramble! Then at a distance, and what a race! The five nearest started; one, a great boy, stumbled over a mole-hill and was flung out; two of the little ones were distanced; and it was a neck and neck heat between a girl in a pink frock (my acquaintance Liddy Wheeler) and a boy in a tattered jacket, name unknown. With fair play Liddy would have beaten, but he of the ragged jacket pulled her back by her new pink frock, rushed forward, and conquered,—George gallantly flinging his last apple into her lap to console her for her defeat.

By this time the aged portress (Dame Wheeler, Liddy's grandmother) had given us admittance, and we stood on the steps in front of the house, in calm survey of the scene before us. Hatherden was just the place to like or not to like, according to the feeling of the hour; a respectable, comfortable country house, with a lawn before, a paddock on one side, a shrubbery on the other; offices and a kitchen garden behind, and the usual ornaments of villas and advertisements, a green-house and a veranda. Now my thoughts were *couleur de rose*, and Hatherden was charming. Even the beds intended for flowers on the lawn, but which, under a summer's neglect, were now dismal receptacles of seeds and weeds, did not shock my gardening eye so much as my companion evidently expected. "We must get my factotum, Clarke, here to-morrow," so ran my thoughts, "to clear away that rubbish, and try a little bold transplanting: late holly-hocks, late dahlias, a few

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pots of lobellias and chrysanthemums, a few patches of coreopsis and china-asters, and plenty of scarlet geraniums, will soon make this desolation flourishing. A good gardener can move any thing now-a-days, whether in bloom or not," thought I, with much complacency, "and Clarke 's a man to transplant Windsor forest without withering a leaf. We 'll have him to-morrow."

The same happy disposition continued after I entered the house. And when left alone in the echoing empty breakfast-room, with only one shutter opened, whilst Dame Wheeler was guiding the companion of my survey to the stable-yard, I amused myself with making, in my own mind, comparisons between what had been, and what would be. There she used to sit, poor Mrs. Norris, in this large airy room, in the midst of its solid handsome furniture, in a great chair at a great table, busily at work for one of her seven small children; the table piled with frocks, trowsers, petticoats, shirts, pinafores, hats, bonnets, all sorts of children's gear, masculine and feminine, together with spelling books, copy books, ivory alphabets, dissected maps, dolls, toys, and gingerbread, for the same small people. There she sat a careful mother, fretting over their naughtiness and their ailments; always in fear of the sun, or the wind, or the rain, of their running to heat themselves, or their standing still to catch cold: not a book in the house fit for a person turned of eight years old! not a grown-up idea! not a thought beyond the nursery! One wondered what she could have talked of before she had children. Good Mrs. Norris, such was she. Good Mr. Norris was, for all purposes of neighbourhood, worse still. He was gapy and fidgetty, and prosy and dozy, kept a tool chest and a medicine chest, weighed out manna and magnesia, constructed fishing-flies, and nets for fruit-trees, turned nutmeg-graters, lined his wife's work-box, and dressed his little daughter's doll; and had a tone of conversation perfectly in keeping with his tastes and pursuits, abundantly tedious, thin and small. One talked

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down to him, worthy gentleman, as one would to his son Willy. These were the neighbours that had been. What wonder that the hill was steep, and the way long, and the common dreary? Then came pleasant thoughts of the neighbours that were to be. The lovely and accomplished wife, so sweet and womanly; the elegant and highly informed husband, so spirited and manly! Art and literature, and wisdom and wit, adorning with a wreathy and garlandy splendour all that is noblest in mind and purest in heart? What wonder that Hatherden became more and more interesting in its anticipated charms, and that I went gaily about the place, taking note of all that could contribute to the comfort of its future inhabitants.

Home I came, a glad and busy creature, revolving in my mind the wants of the house and their speediest remedies—new paper for the drawing-room; new wainscoting for the dining parlour; a stove for the laundry; a lock for the wine cellar; baizing the door of the library; and new painting the hall;—to say nothing of the grand design of Clarke and the flower-beds.

So full was I of busy thoughts, and so desirous to put my plans in train without the loss of a moment, that although the tossing of apples had now resolved itself into a most irregular game of cricket,—George Ropley being batting at one wicket, with little Sam Coper for his mate at the other;—Sam, an urchin of seven years old, but the son of an old player, full of cricket blood, born, as it were, with a bat in his hand, getting double the notches of his tall partner,—an indignity which that well-natured stripling bore with surprising good humour: and although the opposite side consisted of Liddy Wheeler bowling at one end, her old competitor of the ragged jacket at the other, and one urchin in trowsers, and one in petticoats, standing out; in spite of the temptation of watching this comical parody on that manly exercise, rendered doubly amusing by the scientific manner in which little Sam stood at

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his wicket, the perfect gravity of the fieldsman in petticoats, and the serious air with which these two worthies called Liddy to order whenever she transgressed any rule of the game:—Sam will certainly be a great player some day or other, and so (if he be not a girl, for really there's no telling) will the young gentleman standing out. In spite, however, of the great temptation of overlooking a favourite divertisement, with variations so truly original, home we went, hardly pausing to observe the housing of Mr. Keep's wheat harvest. Home we went, adding at every step a fresh story to our Castle in the Air, anticipating happy mornings and joyous evenings at dear Hatherden; in love with the place and all about it, and quite convinced that the hill was nothing, the distance nothing, and the walk by far the prettiest in this neighbourhood.

Home we came, and there we found two letters; one from Mr. Camden, sent per coach, to say that he found they must go abroad immediately, and that they could not therefore think of coming into Berkshire for a year or more; one from the lawyer left in charge of Hatherden, to say, that we could not have the place, as the Norrises were returning to their old house forthwith. And my Castle is knocked down, blown up—which is the right word for the demolishing of such airy edifices? And Hatherden is as far off, and the hill as steep, and the common as dreary as ever.

THE TWO SISTERS.

The pretty square Farm-house, standing at the corner where Kibes Lane crosses the brook, or the brook crosses Kibes Lane, (for the first phrase, although giving by far the closest picture of the place, does, it must be confessed, look rather

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Irish,) and where the aforesaid brook winds away by the side of another lane, until it spreads into a river-like dignity, as it meanders through the sunny plain of Hartley Common, and finally disappears amidst the green recesses of Pinge Wood—that pretty square Farm-house, half hidden by the tall elms in the flower court before it, which, with the spacious garden and orchard behind, and the extensive barn-yards and out-buildings, so completely occupies one of the angles formed by the crossing of the lane and the stream,—that pretty Farm-house contains one of the happiest and most prosperous families in Aberleigh, the large and thriving family of Farmer Evans.

Whether from skill or from good fortune, or, as is most probable, from a lucky mixture of both, every thing goes right in his great farm. His crops are the best in the parish; his hay is never spoiled; his cattle never die; his servants never thieve; his children are never ill. He buys cheap, and sells dear; money gathers about him like a snow-ball; and yet, in spite of all this provoking and intolerable prosperity, every body loves Farmer Evans. He is so hospitable, so good-natured, so generous,—so homely! There, after all, lies the charm. Riches have not only not *spoilt* the man, but they have not altered him. He is just the same in look, and word, and way, that he was thirty years ago, when he and his wife, with two sorry horses, one cow, and three pigs, began the world at Dean-Gate, a little bargain of twenty acres, two miles off:—ay, and his wife is the same woman!—the same frugal, tidy, industrious, good-natured Mrs. Evans, so noted for her activity of tongue and limb, her good looks, and her plain-dressing: as frugal, as good-natured, as active, and as plain-dressing a Mrs. Evans at forty-five as she was at nineteen, and, in a different way, almost as good looking.

Their children—six "boys," as Farmer Evans promiscuously calls them, whose ages vary from eight to eight and twenty—and three girls, two grown up, and one not yet seven, the

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youngest of the family, are just what might be expected from parents so simple and so good. The young men, intelligent and well conducted; the boys, docile and promising; and the little girl as pretty a curly-headed, rosy-cheeked poppet, as ever was the pet and plaything of a large family. It is, however, with the eldest daughters that we have to do.

Jane and Fanny Evans were as much alike as hath often befallen any two sisters not born at one time;—for in the matter of twin children, there has been a series of puzzles ever since the days of the Dromios. Nearly of an age, (I believe that at this moment both are turned of nineteen, and neither have reached twenty,) exactly of a stature, (so high that Frederick would have coveted them for wives for his tall regiment,)—with hazel eyes, large mouth, full lips, white teeth, brown hair, clear healthy complexions, and that sort of nose which is neither Grecian, nor Roman, nor aquiline, nor *le petit nez retroussé,* that some persons prefer to them all; but a nose which, moderately prominent and sufficiently well-shaped, is yet, as far as I know, anonymous, although it be perhaps as common and as well-looking a feature as is to be seen on an English face.

Altogether, they were a pair of tall and comely maidens, and being constantly attired in garments of the same colour and fashion, looked at all times so much alike that no stranger ever dreamed of knowing them apart; and even their acquaintances were rather accustomed to think and speak of them generally as "the Evanses" than as the separate individuals, Jane and Fanny. Even those who did pretend to distinguish the one from the other were not exempt from mistakes, which the sisters, Fanny especially, who delighted in the fun so often produced by the unusual resemblance, were apt to favour by changing places in a walk, or slipping from one side to the other at a country tea-party, or playing a hundred innocent tricks to occasion at once a grave blunder and a merry laugh.

Old Tabitha Goodwin, for instance,—who, being rather pur-

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blind, was jealous of being suspected of seeing less clearly than her neighbours, and had defied even the Evanses to puzzle her discernment—seeking in vain on Fanny's hand the cut finger which she had dressed on Jane's, ascribed the incredible cure to the merits of her own incomparable salve, and could hardly be undeceived, even by the pulling off of Jane's glove, and the exhibition of the lacerated digital sewed round by her own bandage.

Young George Bailey, too, the greatest beau in the parish, having betted at a Christmas party that he would dance with every pretty girl in the room, lost his wager (which Fanny had overheard) by that saucy damsel's slipping into her sister's place, and persuading her to join her own unconscious partner; so that George danced twice with Fanny and not at all with Jane—a flattering piece of malice, which proved, as the young gentleman (a rustic exquisite of the first water) was pleased to assert, that Miss Fanny was not displeased with her partner. How little does a vain man know of woman-kind! If she had liked him, she would not have played the trick for the mines of Golconda.

In short, from their school-days, when Jane was chidden for Fanny's bad work, and Fanny slapped for Jane's bad spelling, down to this their prime of womanhood, there had been no end to the confusion produced by this remarkable instance of family likeness.

And yet Nature, who sets some mark of individuality upon even her meanest productions, making some unnoted difference between the lambs dropped from one ewe, the robins bred in one nest, the flowers growing on one stalk, and the leaves hanging from one tree, had not left these young maidens without one great and permanent distinction—a natural and striking dissimilarity of temper. Equally industrious, affectionate, happy, and kind; each was kind, happy, affectionate, and industrious in a different way. Jane was grave; Fanny was gay. If you heard a laugh or a song, be sure it was

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Fanny: she who smiled, for certain was Fanny: she who jumped the stile, when her sister opened the gate, was Fanny: she who chased the pigs from the garden as merrily as if she were running a race, so that the very pigs did not mind her, was Fanny.

On the other hand, she that so carefully was making, with its own ravelled threads, an invisible darn in her mother's handkerchief, and hearing her little sister read the while; she that so patiently was feeding, one by one, two broods of young turkeys; she that so pensively was watering her own bed of delicate and somewhat rare plants—the pale stars of the Alpine pink, or the alabaster blossoms of the white evening primrose, whose modest flowers, dying off into a blush, resembled her own character, was Jane.

Some of the gossips of Aberleigh used to assert, that Jane's sighing over the flowers, as well as the earlier steadiness of her character, arose from an engagement to my lord's head gardener, an intelligent, sedate, and sober young Scotchman. Of this I know nothing. Certain it is, that the prettiest and newest plants were always to be found in Jane's little flower border, and if Mr. Archibald Maclane did sometimes come to look after them, I do not see that it was any business of anybody's.

In the mean time, a visitor of a different description arrived at the farm. A cousin of Mrs. Evans's had been as successful in trade as her husband had been in agriculture, and he had now sent his only son to become acquainted with his relations, and to spend some weeks in their family.

Charles Foster was a fine young man, whose father was neither more nor less than a rich linen-draper in a great town; but whose manners, education, mind, and character might have done honour to a far higher station. He was, in a word, one of nature's gentlemen; and in nothing did he more thoroughly show his own taste and good breeding, than by entering entirely into the homely ways and old-fashioned habits of his

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country cousins. He was delighted with the simplicity, frugality, and industry, which blended well with the sterling goodness and genuine abundance of the great English farmhouse. The young women especially pleased him much. They formed a strong contrast with any thing that he had met with before. No finery! no coquetry! no French! no piano! It is impossible to describe the sensation of relief and comfort with which Charles Foster, sick of musical misses, ascertained that the whole dwelling did not contain a single instrument, except the bassoon, on which George Evans was wont, every Sunday at church, to excruciate the ears of the whole congregation. He liked both sisters. Jane's softness and considerateness engaged his full esteem; but Fanny's innocent playfulness suited best with his own high spirits and animated conversation. He had known them apart from the first; and indeed denied that the likeness was at all puzzling, or more than is usual between sisters, and secretly thought Fanny as much prettier than her sister as she was avowedly merrier. In doors and out, he was constantly at her side; and before he had been a month in the house, all its inmates had given Charles Foster, as a lover, to his young cousin; and she, when rallied on the subject, cried fie! and pish! and pshaw! and wondered how people could talk such nonsense, and liked to have such nonsense talked to her better than any thing in the world.

Affairs were in this state, when one night Jane appeared even graver and more thoughtful than usual, and far, far sadder. She sighed deeply; and Fanny, for the two sisters shared the same little room, inquired tenderly, "What ailed her?" The inquiry seemed to make Jane worse. She burst into tears, whilst Fanny hung over her, and soothed her. At length, she roused herself by a strong effort; and turning away from her affectionate comforter, said in a low tone, "I have had a great vexation to-night, Fanny; Charles Foster has asked me to marry him."

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"Charles Foster! Did you say Charles Foster?" asked poor Fanny, trembling, unwilling even to trust her own senses against the evidence of her heart; "Charles Foster?"

"Yes, our cousin, Charles Foster."

"And you have accepted him?" inquired Fanny, in a hoarse voice.

"Oh no! no! Do you think I have forgotten poor Archibald? Besides, *I* am not the person whom he ought to have asked to marry him; false and heartless as he is. I would not be his wife; cruel, unfeeling, unmanly as his conduct has been! No! not if he could make me queen of England!"

"You refused him, then?"

"No, my father met us suddenly, just as I was recovering from the surprise and indignation, that at first struck me dumb. But I shall refuse him most certainly;—the false, deceitful, ungrateful villain!"

"My dear father! He will be disappointed. So will my mother."

"They will both be disappointed, and both angry—but not at my refusal. Oh, how they will despise him!" added Jane; and poor Fanny, melted by her sister's sympathy, and touched by an indignation most unusual in that mild and gentle girl, could no longer command her feelings, but flung herself on the bed in that agony of passion and grief, which the first great sorrow seldom fails to excite in a young heart.

After a while she resumed the conversation. "We must not blame him too severely, Jane. Perhaps my vanity made me think his attentions meant more than they really did, and you had all taken up the notion. But you must not speak of him so unkindly. He has done nothing but what is natural. You are so much wiser and better than I am, my own dear Jane! He laughed and talked with me: but he felt your goodness,—and he was right. I was never worthy of him, and you are; and if it were not for Archibald, I should rejoice, from the bottom of my heart," continued Fanny, sobbing,

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"if you would accept"—but unable to finish her generous wish she burst into a fresh flow of tears; and the sisters, mutually and strongly affected, wept in each other's arms, and were comforted.

That night Fanny cried herself to sleep: but such sleep is not of long duration. Before dawn she was up, and pacing, with restless irritability, the dewy grass-walks of the garden and orchard. In less than half an hour, a light elastic step (she knew the sound well!) came rapidly behind her; a hand (oh, how often had she thrilled at the touch of that hand!) tried to draw hers under his own; whilst a well-known voice addressed her in the softest and tenderest accents: "Fanny, my own sweet Fanny! have you thought of what I said to you last night?"

"To *me?*" replied Fanny, with bitterness.

"Ay, to be sure, to your own dear self! Do you not remember the question I asked you, when your good father, for the first time unwelcome, joined us so suddenly that you had no time to say Yes? And will you not say *Yes* now?"

"Mr. Foster!" replied Fanny, with some spirit, "you are under a mistake here. It was to Jane that you made a proposal yesterday evening; and you are taking me for her at this moment."

"Mistake you for your sister! Propose to Jane! Incredible! Impossible! You are jesting."

"Then he mistook Jane for me, last night; and he is no deceiver!" thought Fanny to herself, as, with smiles beaming brightly through her tears, she turned round at his reiterated prayers, and yielded the hand he sought to his pressure. "He mistook her for me! He, that defied us to perplex him!"

And so it was: an unconscious and unobserved change of place, as either sister resumed her station beside little Betsy, who had scampered away after a glow-worm, added to the deepening twilight, and the lover's natural embarrassment, had produced the confusion which gave poor Fanny a night's

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misery, to be compensated by a lifetime of happiness. Jane was almost as glad to lose a lover as her sister was to regain one: Charles is gone home to his father's to make preparations for his bride; Archibald has taken a great nursery garden, and there is some talk in Aberleigh that the marriage of the two sisters is to be celebrated on the same day.

ROSEDALE.

I DON'T know how it happened when we were house-hunting the other day, that nobody ever thought of Rosedale. I should have objected to it, both as out of distance—it's a good six miles off; and as being utterly unrecommendable by one rational person to another. Rosedale! the very name smacks of the Minerva Press, and gives token of the nonsense and trumpery thereunto belonging. Rosedale Cottage! the man who, under that portentous title, takes that house, cannot complain of lack of warning.

Nevertheless is Rosedale one of the prettiest cottages that ever sprung into existence in brick or on paper. All strangers go to see it, and few "cots of spruce gentility" are so well worth seeing. Fancy a low, irregular, white, rough-cast building, thatched with reeds, covered with roses, clematis, and passion-flowers, standing on a knoll of fine turf, amidst flower-beds and shrubberies and magnificent elms, backed by an abrupt hill, and looking over lawny fields to a green common, which is intersected by a gay high road, dappled with ponds of water, and terminated by a pretty village edging off into rich woodlands: imagine this picture of a place tricked out with ornaments of all sorts, conservatories, roseries, rustic seats, American borders, Gothic dairies, Spanish hermitages, and flowers stuck as close as pins in a pincushion, with every

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thing, in short, that might best become the walls of an exhibition room, or the back scene of a play: conceive the interior adorned in a style of elegance still more fanciful, and it will hardly appear surprising that this "unique bijou," as the advertisement calls it, should seldom want a tenant. The rapid succession of these occupiers is the more extraordinary matter. Every body is willing to come to Rosedale, but nobody stays.

For this, however, it is not difficult to assign very sufficient cause. In the first place, the house has the original sin of most ornamented cottages, that of being built on the foundation of a real labourer's dwelling; by which notable piece of economy the owner saved some thirty pounds, at the expense of making half his rooms mere nutshells, and the house incurably damp,—to say nothing of the inconvenience of the many apartments which were erected as after-thoughts, the addenda of the work, and are only to be come at by outside passages and French window-doors. Secondly, that necessary part of a two-story mansion, the staircase, was utterly forgotten by architect, proprietor, and builder, and never missed by any person, till the ladder being one day taken away at the dinner hour, an Irish labourer, accidentally left behind, was discovered by the workmen on their return perched like a bird on the top of the roof, he having taken the method of going up the chimney as the quickest way of getting down. This adventure occasioned a call for the staircase, which was at length inserted by the bye, and is as much like a step-ladder in a dark corner as any thing well can be.* Thirdly and lastly, this beautiful abode is in every way most thoroughly inconvenient and uncomfortable. In the winter one might find as much protection in the hollow of a tree—cold, gusty, sleety, wet; snow threatening from above like an avalanche; water gushing up from below like a fountain; a house of card-paper

* This instance of forgetfulness is not unexampled. A similar accident is said to have happened to Madam d'Arblay in the erection of a cottage built from the profits of her admirable Camilla.

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would be the solider refuge, a gipsy's tent by far the more snug. In summer it is proportionably close and hot, giving little shade and no shelter; and all the year round it is overdone with frippery and finery, a toy-shop in action, a Brobdignagian baby-house.

Every room is in masquerade: the saloon Chinese, full of jars and mandarins and pagodas; the library Egyptian, all covered with hieroglyphics, and swarming with furniture crocodiles and sphynxes. Only think of a crocodile couch, and a sphynx sofa! They sleep in Turkish tents, and dine in a Gothic chapel.* Now English ladies and gentlemen, in their every day apparel, look exceedingly out of place amongst such mummery. The costume wont do. It is not in keeping. Besides, the properties themselves are apt to get shifted from one scene to another, and all manner of anomalies are the consequence. The mitred chairs and screens of the chapel, for instance, so very upright, and tall, and carved, and priestly, were mixed up oddly enough with the squat Chinese bonzes; whilst by some strange transposition a pair of nodding mandarins figured amongst the Egyptian monsters, and by the aid of their supernatural ugliness really looked human.

Then the room taken up by the various knicknackery, the unnamed and unnameable generation of gew-gaws! It always seemed to me to require more house-maids than the house would hold. And the same with the garden. You are so begirt with garlands and festoons, flowers above and flowers below, that you walk about under a perpetual sense of trespass, of taking care of doing mischief, now bobbing against a sweet brier, in which rencontre you have the worst; now flapped in the face by a woodbine, to the discomfiture of both parties; now

* Some of the pleasantest days of my life have been spent in a house so furnished. But then it was of fitting dimensions, and the delightful persons to whom it belonged had a house in London, and a mansion in the country, and used their fancy villa much as one would use a marquee or a pleasure-boat, for gay parties in fine weather. Rosedale, unlucky place, was built to be lived in.

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revenging these vegetable wrongs by tripping up an unfortunate balsam; bonnets, coatskirts, and flounces in equal peril! The very gardeners step gingerly, and tuck their aprons tightly round them before they venture into that fair demesne of theirs, which is, so to say, over-peopled. In short, Rosedale is a place to look at, rather than live in; a fact which will be received without dispute by some score of tenants, by the proprietor of the county newspaper, who keeps the advertisement of this matchless villa constantly set, to his no small emolument, and by the neighbourhood at large, to whom the succession of new faces, new liveries, and new equipages driving about our rustic lanes, and sometimes occupying a very tasty pew in the parish church, has long supplied a source of conversation as unfailing and as various as the weather.

The first person who ascertained, by painful experience, that Rosedale was uninhabitable, was the proprietor, a simple young man from the next town, who unluckily took it into his head that he had a taste for architecture and landscape gardening, and so forth; and falling into the hands of a London upholsterer and a country nurseryman, produced the effort of genius that I have endeavoured to describe. At the end of a month he found that nobody could live there; and with the advice of the nurseryman and the upholsterer, began to talk of rebuilding and new modelling; nay, he actually went so far as to send for the bricklayer; but, fortunately for our man of taste, he had a wife of more sense than himself, who seized the moment of disappointment to disgust him with improvements and improvers, in which feat she was greatly aided by the bills of his late associates; put a stop at once to his projects and his complaints; removed with all speed to their old residence, an ugly, roomy, comfortable red-brick house in the market-place at B——; drew up a flaming advertisement, and turned the grumbling occupant into a thriving landlord. Lucky for him was the day in which William Walker, Esquire, married Miss Bridget Tomkins, second daughter of Mr.

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Samuel Tomkins, attorney at law! And lucky for Mr. Samuel Tomkins was the hour in which he acquired a son-in-law more profitable in the article of leases than the two lords to whom he acted as steward both put together.

First on the list of tenants was a bride and bridegroom, come to spend the early months of their nuptial life in this sweet retirement. They arrived towards the end of August with a great retinue of servants, horses, dogs, and carriages, well bedecked with bridal favours. The very pointers had white ribands round their necks, so splendid was their rejoicing, and had each, as we were credibly informed, eaten a huge slice of wedding cake when the happy couple returned from church. The bride, whom every body except myself called plain, and whom I thought pretty, had been a great heiress, and had married for love the day she came of age. She was slight of form and pale of complexion, with a profusion of brown hair, mild hazel eyes, a sweet smile, a soft voice, and an air of modesty that clung about her like a veil. I never saw a more loveable creature. He was dark, and tall, and stout, and bold, with an assured yet gentlemanly air, a loud voice, a confident manner, and a real passion for shooting. They stayed just a fortnight, during which time he contrived to get warned off half the manors in the neighbourhood, and cut down the finest elm on the lawn one wet morning to open a view of the high road. I hope the marriage has turned out a happy one, for she was a sweet gentle creature. I used to see her leaning over the gate watching his return from shooting with such a fond patience! And her bound to meet him when he did appear! And the pretty coaxing playfulness with which she patted and chided her rivals the dogs! Oh, I hope she is happy! but I fear, I fear.

Next succeeded a couple from India, before whom floated reports golden and gorgeous as the clouds at sunset. Inexhaustible riches; profuse expenditure; tremendous ostentation; unheard of luxury; ortolans; becaficos; French-beans

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at Christmas; green peas at Easter; strawberries always; a chariot and six; twelve black footmen; and parrots and monkeys beyond all count. These were amongst the most moderate of the rumours that preceded them; and every idle person in the country was preparing to be a hanger-on; and every shopkeeper in B. on the watch for a customer; when up drove a quiet-looking old gentleman in a pony-chaise, with a quiet-looking old lady at his side, and took possession, their retinue following in a hack post-chaise. Whether the habits of this Eastern Crœsus corresponded with his modest début, or his magnificent reputation, we had not time to discover, although, from certain indications, I conceive that much might be said on both sides. They arrived in the middle of a fine October, while the China-roses covered the walls, and the China-asters, and dahlias, and fuschias, and geraniums in full blow, gave a summer brilliancy to the lawn; but scarcely had a pair of superb Common-prayer Books, bound in velvet, and a Bible with gold clasps, entered in possession of the pew at church, before "there came a frost, a nipping frost," which turned the China-asters and the China-roses brown, and the dahlias and geraniums black, and the nabob and the nabobess blue. They disappeared the next day, and have never been seen or heard of since.

Then arrived a fox-hunting Baronet, with a splendid stud and a splendid fortune. A young man, a single man, a handsome man! Every speculating mamma in the country fixed her eyes on Sir Robert for a son-in-law; papas were sent to call; brothers were enjoined to go out hunting, and get acquainted; nay, even certain of the young ladies themselves (I grieve to say it!) showed symptoms of condescension which might almost have made their grandmothers start from their graves. But what could they do? How could they help it, poor pretty things? The Baronet, with the instinct of a determined bachelor, avoided a young lady as a sparrow does a hawk, and discovering this shyness, they followed their instinct

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as the hawk would do in a similar case, and pursued the coy bird. It was what sportsmen call a fine open season, which, being translated, means every variety of wintery weather except frost—dirty, foggy, sleety, wet; so such of our belles as looked well on horse-back, took the opportunity to ride to cover and see the hounds throw off; and such as shone more as pedestrians would take an early walk, exquisitely dressed, for their health's sake, towards the general rendezvous. Still Sir Robert was immovable. He made no morning calls, accepted no invitations, spoke to no mortal till he had ascertained that there was neither sister, daughter, aunt, nor cousin in the case. He kept from every petticoat as if it contained the contagion of the plague, shunned ball-rooms and drawing-rooms as if they were pest-houses, and finally, had the comfort of leaving Rosedale without having even bowed to a female during his stay. The final cause of his departure has been differently reported; some hold that he was frightened away by Miss Amelia Singleton, who had nearly caused him to commit involuntary homicide, (is that the word for killing a woman?) by crossing and recrossing before his hunter in Sallow-field lane, thereby putting him in danger of a coroner's inquest; whilst others assert that his landlord, Mr. Walker, happening to call one day, found his tenant in dirty boots on the sphynx sofa, and a Newfoundland dog, dripping with mud, on the crocodile couch, and gave him notice to quit on the spot. For my part I regard this legend as altogether apocryphal, invented to save the credit of the house, by assuming that one of its many inhabitants was turned out, contrary to his own wish. My faith goes entirely with the Miss Amelia version of the history; the more so, as that gentle damsel was so inconsolable as to marry a former beau, a small Squire of the neighbourhood, rather weather-beaten, and not quite so young as he had been, within a month after she had the ill luck not to be run over by Sir Robert.

However that may have been, "thence ensued a vacancy"

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in Rosedale, which was supplied the same week by a musical family, a travelling band—drums, trumpets, harps, pianos, violins, violoncellos, trombones, and German flutes—noise personified! an incarnation of din! The family consisted of three young ladies, who practised regularly six hours a day; a governess, who played on some instrument or other from morning till night; one fluting brother; one fiddling ditto; a violoncelloing music-master; and a singing papa. The only quiet person among them, the "one poor halfpenny-worth of bread to this monstrous quantity of sack," was the unfortunate mamma, sole listener, as it seemed, of her innumerous choir. Oh how we pitied her! She was a sweet placid-looking woman, and younger in appearance than either of her daughters, with a fair open forehead, full dark eyes, lips that seemed waiting to smile, a deep yet cool colour, and a heavenly composure of countenance, resembling in features, expression, and complexion the small Madonnas of Raphael. We never ceased to wonder at her happy serenity until we found out that the good lady was deaf, a discovery which somewhat diminished the ardour of our admiration. How this enviable calamity befell her I did not hear,—but of course that din! The very jars and mandarins cracked under the incessant vibration; I only wonder that the poor house did not break the drum of its ears; did not burst from its own report, and explode like an overloaded gun. One could not see that unlucky habitation half a mile off, without such a feeling of noise as comes over one in looking at Hogarth's enraged musician. To pass it was really dangerous. One stage coach was overturned, and two post-chaises ran away, in consequence of their uproarious doings; and a sturdy old-fashioned country gentleman, who rode a particularly anti-musical, startlish blood-horse, began to talk of inditing Rosedale as a nuisance, when, just at the critical moment, its tenants had the good fortune to discover, that although the hermitage, with its vaulted roof, made a capital concert-room, yet that there was

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not space enough within doors for their several practisings, that the apartments were too small, and the partitions too thin, so that concord was turned into discord, and harmonies went crossing each other all over the house—Mozart jostled by Rossini, and Handel put down by Weber. And away they went also.

Our next neighbours were two ladies, not sisters, except, as one of them said, in soul; kindred spirits determined to retire from the world, and emulate in this sweet retreat the immortal friendship of the ladies of Llangollen.* The names of our pair of friends were Jackson and Jennings, Miss Laura Jackson, (I wonder whether Laura really was her name! She signed herself so in prose and in verse, and would certainly for more reasons than one have disliked an appeal to the Register! besides, she ought to know; so Laura it shall be!) Miss Laura Jackson and Miss Barbara Jennings, commonly called Bab. Both were of that unfortunate class of young ladies, whom the malicious world is apt to call old maids; both rich, both independent, and both, in the fullest sense of the word, cockneys. Laura was tall and lean, and scraggy and yellow, dressing in an Arcadian sort of way, pretty much like an opera shepherdess without a crook, singing pastoral songs prodigiously out of tune, and talking in a deep voice, with much emphasis and astounding fluency, all sorts of sentimentalities all the day long. Miss Barbara on the other hand was short and plump, and round-faced and ruddy, inclining to vulgarity, as Laura to

* I need not, I trust, disclaim any intention of casting the slightest shade of ridicule on the remarkable instance of female friendship to which I have alluded in the text. A union enduring as that has done, from youth to age, adorned by rank, talent, and beauty, cemented by cheerfulness and good humour, and consecrated by benevolence and virtue, can fear no one's censure, and soars far beyond my feeble praise. Such a friendship is the very poetry of life. But the heartless imitation, the absurd parody of the noble and elevating romance, is surely fair game, the more so, as it tends like all parodies to bring the original into undeserved disrepute.

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affectation, with a great love of dancing, a pleasant chuckling laugh, and a most agreeable habit of assentation. Altogether Bab was a likeable person in spite of some nonsense, which is more than could honestly be said for her companion.

Juxta-position laid the corner-stone of this immortal friendship, which had already lasted four months and a half, and, cemented by resemblance of situation and dissimilarity of character, really bade fair to continue some months longer. Both had been heartily weary of their previous situations: Laura keeping house for a brother in Aldersgate Street, where, as she said, she was overwhelmed by odious vulgar business; Barbara living with an aunt on Fish-street Hill, where she was tired to death of having nothing to do. Both had a passion for the country. Laura, who, except one jaunt to Margate, had never been out of the sound of Bow-bell, that she might ruralize after the fashion of the poets, sit under trees and gather roses all day long; Bab, who, in spite of yearly trips to Paris and Brussels and Amsterdam and Brighton, had hardly seen a green field except through a coach window, was, on her side, possessed with a mania for notability and management; *she yearned to keep cows*, fatten pigs, breed poultry, grow cabbages, make hay, brew and bake, and wash and churn. Visions of killing her own mutton flitted over her delighted fancy; and when one evening at a ball in the Borough her favourite partner had deserted her to dance with her niece, and Miss Laura, who had been reading Miss Seward's letters, proposed to her to retire from the world and its vanities, in imitation of the illustrious recluses of Llangollen, Miss Barbara, caught above all things with the prospect of making her own butter every morning for breakfast,* acceded to the proposal most joyfully.

The vow of friendship was taken, and nothing remained but to look out for a house. Barbara wanted a farm, Laura a cottage; Barbara talked of cows and clover, Laura of nightin-

* Vide Anna Seward's Correspondence.

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gales and violets; Barbara sighed for Yorkshire pastures, Laura for Welch mountains; and the scheme seemed likely to go off for want of an habitation, when Rosedale in all the glory of advertisement shone on Miss Laura in the Morning Post, and was immediately engaged by the delighted friends on a lease of seven, fourteen, or one and twenty years.

It was a raw blowy March evening, when the fair partners arrived at the Cottage. Miss Laura made a speech in her usual style on taking possession—an invocation to friendship and rural nature, and a deprecation of cities, society, and men—at the conclusion of which Miss Barbara underwent an embassade; and having sufficiently admired the wonders within, they sallied forth with a candle and lanthorn to view their ruralities without. Miss Laura was better satisfied with this ramble than her companion. She found at least trees and primroses, whilst the country felicities of ducks and chickens were entirely wanting. Bab, however, reconciled the matter by supposing they were gone to roost, and a little worn out by the journey, wisely followed their example.

The next day saw Miss Laura obliged to infringe her own most sacred and inviolable rule, and admit a man—the apothecary—into this maiden abode. She had sat under a tree the night before listening not to, but for a nightingale, and was laid up by a most unpastoral fit of the rheumatism. Barbara, in the mean while, was examining her territory by day-light, and discovering fresh cause of vexation at every step. Here she was in the country, in a cottage, "comprising," as the advertisement set forth, "all manner of convenience and accommodation," without grass or corn, or cow or sheep, or pig or chicken, or turkey or goose;—no laundry, no brewhouse, no pigstye, no poultry-yard! not a cabbage in the garden! not a useful thing about the house! Imagine her consternation!

But Barbara was a person of activity and resource. She sallied out forthwith to the neighbouring village, bought utensils and live stock; turned the coach-house into a cow-stall; projected a pigstye in the rosery; installed her ducks and

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geese in the orangery; introduced the novelty of real milk-pans, churns, and butter-prints, amongst the old china, Dutch tiles, and stained glass of that make-believe toy the Gothic dairy; placed her brewing vessels in "the housekeeper's room," which, to accord with the genius of the place, had been fitted up to represent a robber's cave; deposited her washing-tubs in the butler's pantry, which, with a similar regard to congruity, had been decorated with spars and shells like a Nereid's grotto; and finally, in spite of all warning and remonstrance, drove her sheep into the shrubbery, and tethered her cows upon the lawn.

This last stroke was too much for the gardener's patience. He betook himself in all haste to B. to apprize Mr. Walker; and Mr. Walker, armed with Mr. Samuel Tomkins and a copy of the lease, made his appearance with breathless speed at Rosedale. Barbara, in spite of her usual placidity, made good battle on this occasion. She cried, and scolded, and reasoned, and implored; it was as much as Mr. Walker and Mr. Samuel Tomkins, aided by their mute witness the lease, and that very clamorous auxiliary the gardener, could do to out-talk her. At last, however, they were victorious. Poor Miss Bab's live stock were forced to make a rapid retreat, and she would probably have marched off at the same time, had not an incident occurred which brought her visions of rural felicity much nearer to reality than could have been anticipated by the liveliest imagination.

The farmer's wife of whom she had made her purchases, and to whom she unwillingly addressed herself to resume them, seeing, to use her own words, "how much Madam seemed to take on at parting with the poor dumb things," kindly offered to accommodate them as boarders at a moderate stipend, volunteering also lessons in the chicken-rearing and pig-feeding department, of which the lady did to be sure stand rather in need.

Of course Barbara closed with this proposal at a word. She never was so happy in her life; her cows, pigs, and poul

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try, *en pension*, close by, where she might see them every hour if she liked, and she herself with both hands full, learning at the Farm, and ordering at the Cottage, and displaying all that can be imagined of ignorance and good humour at both.

Her mistakes were innumerable. Once, for instance, she carried away by main force from a turkey, whose nest she had the ill-luck to discover, thirteen eggs, just ready to hatch, and, after a severe combat with the furious and injured hen, brought them home to Rosedale as fresh-laid—under a notion rather new in natural history, that turkeys lay all their eggs in one day. Another time she discovered a hoard of choice double dahlia roots in a tool-house belonging to her old enemy the gardener, and delivered them to the cook for Jerusalem artichokes, who dressed them as such accordingly. No end to Barbara's blunders! but her good humour, her cheerfulness, her liberality, and the happy frankness with which she laughed at her own mistakes, carried her triumphantly through. Every body liked her, especially a smug little curate who lodged at the very farm-house where her pigs and cattle were boarded, and said twenty times a day that Miss Barbara Jennings was the pleasantest woman in England. Barbara was never so happy in her life.

Miss Laura, on her part, continued rheumatic and poorly, and kept closely to her bed-chamber, the Turkish tent, with no other consolations than novels from the next town, and the daily visits of the apothecary. She was shocked at Miss Barbara's intimacy with the farm-people, and took every opportunity of telling her so. Barbara, never very fond of her fair companion's harangues, and not the more reconciled to them from their being directed against her own particular favourites, ran away as often as she could. So that the two friends had nearly arrived at the point of not speaking, when they met one afternoon by mutual appointment in the Chinese saloon. Miss Barbara blushed and looked silly, and seemed trying to say something which she could not bring out. Miss Laura tried to blush rather unsuccessfully. She, however,

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could talk at all times, her powers of speech were never known to fail; and at the end of an oration in which she proved, as was pretty evident, that they had been mistaken in supposing the company of each all-sufficient to the other, as well as in their plan of seclusion from the world, she invited Miss Barbara, after another vain attempt at a blush, to pay the last honours to their friendship by attending her to the hymeneal altar, whither she had promised to accompany Mr. Opodeldoc on the morning after the next.

"I can't," replied Miss Barbara.

"And why not?" resumed Miss Laura. "Surely Mr. Opodel——"

"Now, don't be angry!" interrupted our friend Bab. "I can't be your bridemaid the day after to-morrow, because I am going to be married to-morrow myself."

And so they left Rosedale, and I shall leave them.

HOPPING BOB.

It was on a rainy day, late in last November, that Mrs. Villars came to take possession of her new residence, called the

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Lodge, a pretty house about ten miles off, situated within the boundaries of Oakhampstead Park, the pleasant demesne of her brother-in-law, Sir Arthur Villars, and generally appropriated to the use of some dowager of that ancient and wealthy race.

Mrs. Villars was an elderly lady, of moderate fortune and excellent character. She was the widow of a dignified and richly-beneficed clergyman, who had been dead some years, and had left her with three promising sons and two pretty daughters, all of whom were now making their way in the world to her perfect satisfaction;—the daughters happily and respectably married; the sons thriving in different professions; and all of them as widely scattered as the limits of our little island could well permit;—so that their mother, disencumbered of the cares of her offspring, had nothing now to prevent her accepting Sir Arthur's kind offer of leaving the great town in which she had hitherto resided, and coming to occupy the family jointure-house at Oakhampstead. To inhabit a mansion in which so many stately matrons of the house of Villars had lived and died, was a point of dignity no less than of economy; and besides, there was no resisting so excellent an opportunity of gratifying, amidst the good Archdeacon's native shades, the taste for retirement and solitude of which she had all her life been accustomed to talk. Talk indeed she did so very much of this taste, that shrewd observers somewhat questioned its existence, and were not a little astonished when, after dallying away the summer over take-leave visits, she and her whole establishment (two maids, a pony-chaise, a tabby-cat, and her scrub, Joseph) left C., with its society and amusements, its morning calls and evening parties, for solitude and the Lodge.

Never was place or season better calculated to bring a lover of retirement to the test. Oakhampstead, separated from our populous neighbourhood by a barrier of wild heath, was situated in the most beautiful and least inhabited part of a

thinly inhabited and beautiful county; the roads were execrable; the nearest post town was seven miles off; the vicar was a bachelor of eighty; and the great house was shut up. There was not even one neighbour of decent station to whom she might complain of the want of a neighbourhood. Poor Mrs. Villars! the last stroke too—the desertion of the Park—was an unexpected calamity; for although she knew that Sir Arthur had never resided there since the death of a most beloved daughter, after which event it had been entirely abandoned, except for a few weeks in the autumn, when his only son, Harry Villars, had been accustomed to visit it for the purpose of shooting, yet she had understood that this her favourite nephew was on the point of marriage with the beautiful heiress of General Egerton, and that this fine old seat was to form the future residence of the young couple. Something, she learned, had now occurred to prevent a union which, a few months ago, had seemed so desirable to all parties,—some dispute between the fathers, originally trifling, but worked up into bitterness by the influence of temper; and all preparations were stopped, Harry Villars gone abroad, and the great house as much shut up as ever. Poor Mrs. Villars, who, after all her praises of retirement and her declared love of solitude, could not with any consistency run away from this "Deserted Village," was really as deserving of pity as any one guilty of harmless affectation well could be.

The good lady, however, was not wanting to herself in this emergency. She took cold, that she might summon an apothecary from the next town; and she caused her pigs to commit a trespass on the garden of a litigious farmer, that she might have an excuse for consulting the nearest attorney. Both resources failed. The medical man was one of eminent skill and high practice, whom nothing but real illness could allure into constant attendance; and the lawyer was honest, and settled the affair of the pigs at a single visit. All that either could do for her was to enumerate two or three empty

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houses that might possibly be filled in the course of the next summer, and two or three people who would probably call when the roads became passable: so that poor Mrs. Villars, after vainly trying to fill up her vacant hours—alas! all her hours!—by superintending her own poultry-yard, overlooking the village-school, giving away flannel petticoats, and relieving half the old women in the parish, had very nearly made up her mind to find the Lodge disagree with her, and to return to her old quarters at C., when the arrival of a fresh inmate at the next farm-house gave an unexpected interest to her own situation.

Oakhampstead was, as I have said, a very beautiful spot. Its chief beauty consisted in a small lake or mere without the park, surrounded partly by pastoral meadow-grounds, and partly by very wild and romantic woodland scenery, amongst which grew some of the noblest oaks in the kingdom. The water did not, perhaps, cover more than thirty acres; although a length disproportioned to its breadth, a bend in the middle, and above all, the infinite variety of its shores, indented with tiny bays and jutting out into mimic promontories, gave it an appearance of much greater extent. Rides and walks had formerly been cut around it; but these were now rude and overgrown, the rustic seats decayed and fallen, and the summer-houses covered with ivy and creeping plants. Since the absence of Sir Arthur neglect had succeeded to care; but a poet or a painter would have felt that the scene had gained in picturesqueness what it had lost in ornament. A green boat, however, and a thatched boat-house, still remained in excellent preservation under the shadow of some magnificent elms; and the chimney of the boatman's cottage might just be seen peeping between the trees, over the high embankment which formed the head of the lake. The only other habitation visible from the water was an old farm-house, the abode of Farmer Ashton, whose wife, formerly the personal attendant of the late Lady Villars, had soon been found by her surviving rela-

tive to be by far the most conversable person in the place; and if the many demands on her attention, the care of men, maids, cows, calves, pigs, turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens, and children, would have allowed her to devote much time to the unfortunate lady, her society would doubtless have proved a great solace and resource. But Mrs. Ashton, with all her desire to oblige Mrs. Villars, was enviably busy, and could only at short and distant intervals listen to, and, by listening, relieve the intolerable ennui of her seclusion.

Now, however, a fresh inmate had made her appearance at the farm: a young woman, whom Mrs. Ashton called Anne, and introduced as her niece; who having much leisure, (for apparently she did nothing in the family but assist in the lighter needle-work,) and evincing, as far as great modesty and diffidence would permit, her respectful sympathy with the involuntary recluse, became her favourite auditress during her frequent visits to Farmer Ashton's; and was soon sent for as a visitor (an humble visitor, for neither Mrs. Villars nor her young guest ever forgot the difference of their stations) at the Lodge. Seldom a day passed without Joseph and the pony-chaise being sent to fetch Anne from the farm. Nothing went well without her.

Partly, of course, the charm might be resolvable into the bare fact of getting a listener; any good listener would have been a welcome acquisition in this emergency; that is to say, any one who felt and showed a genuine sympathy with the "Fair afflicted;" but few would have been so welcome as Anne, who soon became, on the score of her own merits, a first-rate favourite with Mrs. Villars.

Whether Anne was pretty or not was a standing question in the village of Oakhampstead. Her zealous patroness answered without the slightest hesitation in the affirmative. Other people doubted. For the poorer sort her face and figure wanted showiness; whilst the young farmers and persons of that class complained that she was not, according to their no-

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tions, sufficiently genteel. Mrs. Villars's man-of-all-work, Joseph, combined both objections by declaring that Anne would be well enough if she were smarter. My readers must judge for themselves, as well at least as a pen-and-ink drawing will enable them.

Her figure was round and short, and piquante and youthful. Her face was round also, with delicate features and a most delicate complexion, as white and smooth as ivory, and just coloured enough for health. She had finely cut grey eyes, with dark eye-brows and eye-lashes, a profusion of dark hair, and a countenance so beaming with gaiety and sweetness, that the expression was always like that of other faces when they smile. Then her voice and accent were enchanting. She sang little snatches of old airs in gushes like a nightingale—freely, spontaneously, as if she could no more help singing as she went about than that "angel of the air:" and her spoken words were as musical and graceful as her songs; what she said being always sweet, gentle, and intelligent; sometimes very lively, and sometimes a little sad.

Her dress was neat and quiet,—plain dark gowns, fitting with great exactness, such as were equally becoming to her station and her figure; delicately white caps and habit-shirts, and the simplest of all simple straw bonnets. The only touch of finery about her was in her *chaussure*; the silk stockings and kid slippers in which her beautiful little feet were always clad, and in her scrupulously clean and new-looking French gloves, of the prettiest pale colours;—a piece of quaker-like and elegant extravagance, which, as well as the purity of her accent and diction, somewhat astonished Mrs. Villars, until she found from Mrs. Ashton that Anne also had been a lady's maid, admitted early into the family, and treated almost as a companion by her young mistress.

"Where had she lived?" was the next question.

"In General Egerton's family," was the reply; and a new source of interest and curiosity was opened to the good lady,

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who had never seen her niece, that was to have been, and was delighted with the opportunity of making a variety of inquiries respecting herself and her connexions. Anne's answers to these questions were given with great brevity and some reluctance; she looked down and blushed, and fidgeted with a sprig of myrtle which she held in her hand, in a manner widely different from her usual lady-like composure.

"Was Miss Egerton so very handsome?"

"Oh, no!"

"So very accomplished?"

"No."

"Did Harry love her very much?"

"Yes."

"Did she love him?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Was she worthy of him?"

"No."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Villars, "I thought she was too fine a lady, too full of airs and graces! I have had my doubts of her ever since a note that she sent me, written on blue embossed paper, and smelling most atrociously of otto of roses. I dare say Harry has had a narrow escape. Sir Arthur, even before the quarrel, said she was quite a *petite maîtresse*. Then you think, Anne, that my nephew is better without her?"

This query caused a good deal of blushing hesitation, and nearly demolished the sprig of myrtle. On its being repeated, she said, "She did not know! she could not tell! She did not wish to speak ill of Miss Egerton; but few ladies appeared to her worthy of Mr. Villars—he was so amiable."

"Was Miss Egerton kind to her?"

"Pretty well," answered Anne, quietly.

"And the General?"

"Oh, very! very!" rejoined Anne, sighing deeply.

"Why did she leave the family?"

At this question poor Anne burst into tears, and the con-

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versation ended. Mrs. Villars, unwilling to distress her favourite, did not resume it. She was already prepossessed against the Egertons by the disappointment and vexation which they had occasioned to her nephew, and had little doubt but that either the General or his daughter had behaved unjustly or unkindly to Anne.

Winter had now worn away; even those remains of winter which linger so long amidst the buds and blossoms of spring; spring itself had passed into summer, the country was every day assuming fresh charms, the roads were becoming passable, and distant neighbours were beginning to discover and to value the lady of the Lodge, who became more reconciled to her residence, varied as it now was by occasional visits to the county families, and frequent excursions with Anne upon the lake.

On these occasions they were constantly attended by the boatman, a handy, good humoured, shock-pated fellow, of extraordinary ugliness, commonly called Bob Green, but also known by the name of "Hopping Bob;" not on account of his proficiency in that one-legged accomplishment, as the cognomen would seem to imply, but because an incurable lameness in the hip had produced a jerking sort of motion in walking, much resembling that mode of progress; and had also given a peculiar one-sided look to his short muscular figure. The hop, it must be confessed, stood much in his way on land, although he was excellent in the management of a boat; in rowing, or steering, or fishing, or any thing that had relation to the water.

A clever fellow was Bob, and a civil, and paid much attention to his lady and her young companion; and as the summer advanced, they passed more and more time on the beautiful lake, of which they continued the sole visitors; the great house being still deserted, and little known either of Sir Arthur or his son.

One afternoon, Mrs. Villars, returning unexpectedly from

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a distant visit, drove down to the farm, intending to spend the evening with Anne in the pleasure-boat. It was a bright sunny day towards the middle of July. The blue sky, dappled with fleecy clouds, was reflected on the calm clear water, and mingled with the shadows of the trees upon the banks, to which the sun, shining through the tall oaks, gave occasionally a transparent glitter, as of emeralds or beryls; swallows skimmed over the lake, flitting around and about, after the myriads of insects that buzzed in the summer air; the white water-lily lay in its pure beauty in the midst of its deep green leaves; the fox-glove and the wild veitch were glowing in the woods; the meadow-sweet, the willow-herb, and the golden flag fringed the banks; cows stood cooling their limbs in the shallow indented bays, and a flock of sheep was lying at rest in the distant meadows.

Altogether it was a scene of sweet and soothing beauty; and Mrs. Villars was looking for Anne to partake in her enjoyment, (for Anne, Mrs. Ashton had told her, was gone down to the mere,) when in a small cove at the other side of the lake, she beheld in a fine effect of sunny light, the boat, their own identical green boat, resting quietly on the water, with two persons sitting in it, seemingly in earnest conversation. One of the figures was undoubtedly Anne. Her astonished friend recognised at a glance her lead-coloured gown, her straw bonnet, and that peculiar air and attitude which gave grace and beauty to her simple dress. The other was a man, tall, as it seemed, and elegant — most certainly a gentleman. Mrs. Villars even fancied that the height and bearing had a strong resemblance to her own dear nephew, Harry; and immediately a painful suspicion of the possible cause of Anne's leaving Miss Egerton forced itself upon her mind. Harry had perhaps found the lady's maid no less charming than her mistress!

A thousand trifling circumstances in favour of this opinion rushed on her recollection: Anne's blushes when Harry was

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accidentally named; her constant avoidance of all mention of the family in which she had resided; the great inequality of her spirits; her shrinking from the very sight of chance visitors; the emotion amounting to pain, which any remarkable instance of kindness or confidence never failed to occasion her; and above all, the many times in which, after seeming on the point of making some avowal to her kind patroness, she had drawn suddenly back: all these corroborating circumstances pressed at once, with startling distinctness, on Mrs. Villars's memory; and, full of care, she returned to the farm to cross-question Mrs. Ashton.

Never was examination more thoroughly unsatisfactory. Mrs. Ashton was that provoking and refractory thing, a reluctant witness. First, she disputed the facts of the case: "Had Mrs. Villars seen the boat? Was she sure that she had seen it? Was it actually their own green boat? Did it really contain two persons? And was the female certainly Anne?"

All these questions being answered in the affirmative, Mrs. Ashton shifted her ground, and asserted that "If the female in question were certainly Anne, her companion must, with equal certainty, have been the boatman, Bob Green, 'Hopping Bob,' as he was called!" and the farmer coming in at the moment, she called on him to support her assertion, which, without hearing a word of the story, he did most positively, as a dutiful and obedient husband ought to do—"Yes, for certain it must be Hopping Bob! It could be no other."

"Hopping Bob!" ejaculated Mrs. Villars, whose patience was by this time well nigh exhausted: "Hopping Bob! when I have told you that the person in the boat was a young man, a tall man, a slim man, a gentleman! Hopping Bob, indeed!" and before the words were fairly uttered, in hopped Bob himself.

To Mrs. Villars this apparition gave unqualified satisfaction, by affording, as she declared, the most triumphant evidence of

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an alibi ever produced in or out of a court of justice. Her opponent, however, was by no means disposed to yield the point. She had perfect confidence in Bob's quickness of apprehension, and no very strong fear of his abstract love of truth, and determined to try the effect of a leading question. She immediately, therefore, asked him with much significance of manner, "whether he had not just landed from the lake, and reached the farm by the short cut across the coppice?" adding "that her niece had probably walked towards the boat-house to meet Mrs. Villars, and that Bob had better go and fetch her."

This question produced no other answer than a long whistle from the sagacious boatman. Whether Mrs. Ashton over-rated his ability, or under-rated his veracity, or whether his shrewdness foresaw that detection was inevitable, and that it would "hurt his conscience to be found out," whichever were the state of the case he positively declined giving any evidence on the question; and after standing for a few moments eyeing his hostess with a look of peculiar knowingness, vented another long whistle, and hopped off again.

Mrs. Villars, all her fears confirmed, much disgusted with the farmer, and still more so with the farmer's wife, was also departing, when just as she reached the porch, she saw two persons advancing from the lake, to the house—her nephew Harry Villars, and Anne leaning on his arm!

With a countenance full of grieved displeasure, she walked slowly towards them. Harry sprang forward to meet her: "Hear me but for one moment, my dearest aunt! Listen but to four words, and then say what you will. This is my wife."

"Your wife! why I thought you loved Miss Egerton?"

"Well, and this *is*, or rather happily for me this *was*, Miss Egerton;" replied Henry, smiling.

"Miss Egerton!" exclaimed the amazed and half incredulous Mrs. Villars, "Miss Egerton! Anne, that was not smart enough for Joseph, the fine lady that sent me the rose-scented

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note! Anne at the farm, the great heiress! My own good little Anne!"

"Ay, my dear aunt, your own Anne and my own Anne—blessings on the word! When we were parted on a foolish political quarrel between our fathers, she was sent, under the care of her cousin, Lady Lemingham, to Florence. Lady Lemingham was much my friend. She not only persuaded Anne into marrying me privately, but managed to make the General believe that his daughter continued her inmate abroad; whilst Mrs. Ashton, another good friend of mine, contrived to receive her at home. We have been sad deceivers," continued Harry, "and at last Anne, fettered by a promise of secrecy, which your kindness tempted her every moment to break, could bear the deceit no longer. She wrote to her father, and I spoke to mine; and they are reconciled, and all is forgiven. I see that you forgive us," added he, as his sweet wife lay sobbing on Mrs. Villars's bosom,—"I see that you forgive *her;* and you must forgive me too, for her dear sake. Your pardon is essential to our happiness; for we are really to live at the Park, and one of our first wishes must always be, that you may continue at the great house the kindness that you have shown to Anne at the Farm."

A VISIT TO RICHMOND.

THE Macadamized roads, and the light open carriages lately introduced, have so abridged, I had well nigh said annihilated, distance in this fair Island, that what used to be a journey is now a drive; our neighbourhood has become, from a reverse reason to theirs, as extensive as that of the good people in the back settlements of America; we think nothing of thirty miles for a morning call, or forty for a dinner-party; Rich-

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mond is quite within visiting distance, and London will shortly be our market-town.

This pleasant change was never so strongly impressed on my mind as by a hasty and most agreeable jaunt which I made to the former of these places during one of the few fine days last summer. The invitation, written one day, arrived in course of post by breakfast-time the next, and without any uncomfortable hurry in packing or setting off, we were quietly dining with our kind inviters, rather before than after our usual hour, and might have returned very conveniently the same evening, had we been so minded.

There was some temptation to this exploit, besides the very great one of whisking to and fro like a jack o'lantern, and making all the village stare at our rapidity. Our road lay through the Forest, and we might have passed again by moonlight the old romantic royal town of Windsor, with its stately palace and its Shakspearian associations—I never catch a glimpse of those antique buildings, but those "Merry Wives" and all their company start up before my eyes; might have heard the night-wind rustle amongst the venerable oaks and beeches of its beautiful park; might have seen the deer couching in the fern, and the hare scudding across the glades; and as we paused to contemplate the magical effects of light and shadow which forest scenery displays at such an hour, might have seen the Castle in the distance, throwing its dark masses against the sky, and looking like some stupendous work of nature, or some grand dream of Gothic architecture, rather than an actual erection of man. Every body that has seen Windsor by moonlight will understand how much one wishes to see that most striking sight again;—but our friends were not people to run away from, besides I wanted to get better acquainted with the celebrated spot where they resided;—so we staid.

"God made the Country and man made the Town!" I wonder in which of the two divisions Cowper would have

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placed Richmond. Every Londoner would laugh at the rustic who should call it town, and with foreigners it passes pretty generally for a sample (the only one they see) of the rural villages of England; and yet it is no more like the country, the real untrimmed genuine country, as we see it hereabouts, for instance, than a garden is like a field. I do not say this in disparagement. Richmond is nature in a court-dress, but still nature,—ay, and very lovely nature too, gay and happy and elegant as one of Charles the Second's beauties, and with as little to remind one of the original penalty of labour, or poverty, or grief, or crime. I suppose that since no place on the globe is wholly exempt from their influence, care and vice may exist even there. They are, however, well hidden. The inhabitants may find them, or they may find the inhabitants, but to the casual visitor Richmond appears as a sort of fairy-land, a piece of the old Arcadia, a holiday spot for ladies and gentlemen, where they lead a happy out-of-door life, like the gay folks in Watteau's pictures, and have nothing to do with the work-a-day world.

The principal charm of this smiling landscape is the river, the beautiful river; for the hill seems to me over-rated. That celebrated prospect is, to my eye, too woody, too leafy, too green. There is a monotony of vegetation, a heaviness. The view was finer as I first saw it in February, when the bare branches admitted frequent glimpses of houses and villages, and the colouring was left to the fancy, than when arrayed in the pomp and garniture of "the leafy month of June." Canova said it only wanted crags. I rather incline to the old American criticism, and think that it wants clearing.

But the river! the beautiful river! there is no overrating that. Brimming to its very banks of meadow or of garden; clear, pure, and calm, as the bright summer sky, which is reflected in clearer brightness from its bosom;—no praise can be too enthusiastic for that glorious stream. How gracefully it glides through the graceful bridge! And how the boats be-

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come it! And how pretty those boats are, from the small skiff of the market woman laden with fruit and flowers, or the light-green pleasure vessel with its white awning and its gay freight of beaux and belles, to the heavy steam-boat which comes walloping along with a regular mechanical combination of noise and motion, rumpling the quiet waters, and leaving a track of waves which vary most agreeably the level lake-like surface of the tranquil river. Certainly the Thames is the pleasantest high-way in his Majesty's dominions.

Some of the happiest hours I ever passed in my life were spent on its bosom in one of those sweet and shady June mornings, when the light clouds seemed as it were following the sun, and enfolding him in a thousand veils of whiter alabaster, and the soft air came loaded with fragrance from gardens which were one flush of roses and honeysuckles. I shall not easily forget that morning. Gliding along through those beautiful scenes with companions worthy of their beauty; sunk in that silence of deep enjoyment, that delicious dreaminess which looks so like thought, although in reality a much wiser and happier thing; listening half unconsciously to Emily I.'s sweet Venetian ballads, the singer and her song so united to the scene and the hour; repeating almost as unconsciously as we met the Queen-birds,

> "The swans on fair St. Mary's lake,
> Float double, swan and shadow;"

just roused as we passed Pope's grotto, or the arch over Strawberry Hill; and then landing at Hampton Court, the palace of the Cartoons and of the Rape of the Lock, and coming home with my mind full of the divine Raphael and of that glorious portrait of Titian by himself, which, next to the Cartoons, forms the chief ornament of that regal mansion;—strangely chequered and intersected as those strange things fancy and memory are apt to be, by vivid images of the fair Belinda, and of that inimitable game at Ombre which will live

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longer than any painting, and can only die with the language. There is no forgetting that morning.

Another almost as pleasant was passed in going down the river towards Kew, amongst all sorts of royal recollections, from the remains of the house of Anne of Cleves, to the lime trees fragrant with blossom and musical with bees, under which the late king and queen used to sit of a summer evening, whilst their children were playing round them on the grass. Kew Palace is in fine harmony with this pretty family scene. One likes to think of royalty, so comfortable and homely and unconstrained, as it must have been in that small ugly old-fashioned house. Princes are the born thralls of splendour, and to see them eased of their cumbrous magnificence produces much such a sensation of pleasure as that which one feels in reading the fine passage of Ivanhoe, where the collar is taken from the neck of Gurth, and he leaps up a free man. At Kew, too, in those confined and ill-furnished rooms, the royal inhabitants were not without better luxuries; books accessible and readable, and looking as if they had been read, and a fine collection of cabinet pictures: superb Canalettis; the famous Dropsical Woman, on which the queen is said, during her last illness, to have fixed her eyes so frequently, and with such an intense expression of self-pity; and a portrait of Vandyke, which rivals the Titian, the elegant Vandyke with his head over the shoulder, which has been so often engraved. What a noble race of men those great painters were! There is nothing in all their works grander or fuller of intellectual beauty than some of their own heads, as we find them recorded in their portraits of themselves, or in the interesting collection of Vasari.

This remark will hardly apply to one great painter, whose residence forms one of the many delightful associations of Richmond. Sir Joshua, who flattered all other persons, did himself so little justice, that in his own portraits he might pass for a dancing master. His villa is here; rich in re-

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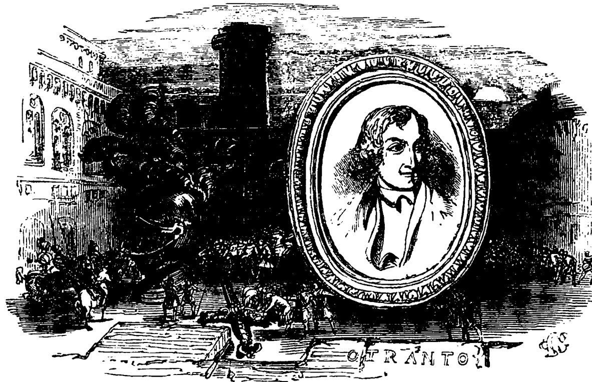
membrances of Johnson and Boswell, and Goldsmith and Burke; here the spot where the poet Thomson used to write; here the elegant house of Owen Cambridge; close by the celebrated villa of Pope, where one seems to see again Swift and Gay, St. John and Arbuthnot; a stone's throw off the still more celebrated Gothic toy-shop, Strawberry Hill, which we all know so well from the minute and vivid descriptions of its master, the most amusing of letter-writers, the most fashionable of antiquaries, the most learned of *petit-maîtres*, the cynical, finical, delightful Horace Walpole. Here, too, is



Richmond Park, where Jeanie Deans and the Duke of Argyle met Queen Caroline: it has been improved, unluckily, and the walk where the interview took place no longer exists. To make some amends, however,—for every thing belonging to those delicious books assumes the form of historical interest, becomes an actual reality—to compensate for this disappointment, in removing some furniture from an old house in the town, three portraits were discovered in the wainscot, George the Second, a staring likeness, between Lady Suffolk and Queen Caroline. The paintings were the worst of that bad

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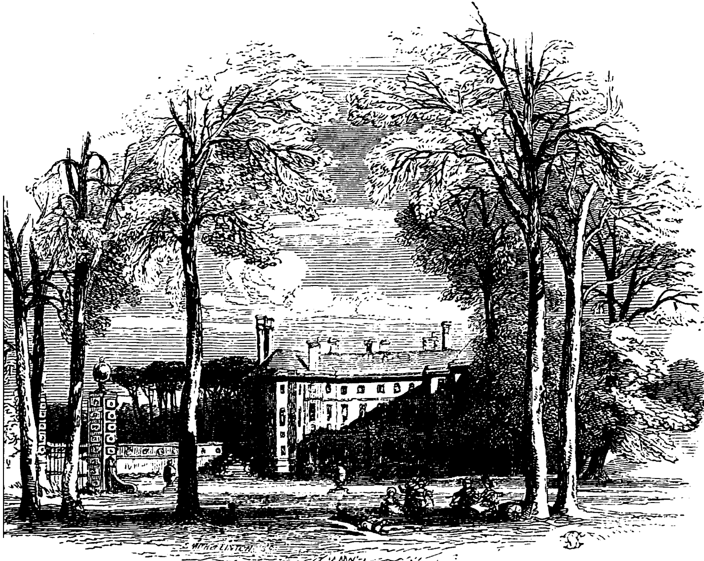
era, but the position of the three and the recollection of Jeanie Deans was irresistible; those pictures ought never to be separated.

But of all the celebrated villas round Richmond, none pleased me better than one which seemed so unsuited to that gay scene, that one cannot look at it without wondering how



it came there. I speak of Ham House, a stately old place, retired from the river, which is concealed and divided from it by rows of huge trees.

Ham House is a perfect model of the mansion of the last century, with its dark shadowy front, its steps and terraces, its marble basins, and its deep silent court, whose iron gate, as Horace Walpole used to complain, was never opened. Every thing about it belongs to the time of hoops and peri-

wigs. Harlow Place must have been just such an abode of stateliness and seclusion. Those iron gates seem to have been erected for no other purpose than to divide Lovelace from Clarissa; they look so stern and so unrelenting. We almost expect to see her through them sweeping slowly along the terrace walk in the pure dignity of her swan-like beauty, with her jealous sister watching her from a window, and we look for him, too, at the corner of the wall, waiting to deposit a letter, and listening with a speaking eagerness to the rustle of her silk gown. If there were any Clarissas now-a-days they would certainly be found at Ham House. And the keeping is so perfect. The very flowers are old-fashioned. No American borders, no kalmias or azaleas or magnolias, or such heathen shrubs! No flimsy China roses! Nothing new-fangled! None but flowers of the olden time, arranged in gay formal knots, staid and prim and regular, and without a leaf awry. Add but round Dutch honeysuckles, and I dare say that Fletcher's beautiful song, which I shall borrow to conclude my description, might comprise the whole catalogue.

"Roses, their sharp spines being gone,
Not royal in their smell alone,
But in their hue;
Virgin pinks of odours faint,
Daisies smell-less but most quaint,
And sweet thyme true.

Primrose, first-born child of Ver,
Merry spring-time's harbinger,
With her bells dim,
Oxlips in their cradles growing,
Marigolds on death-beds blowing,
* Lark-heels trim."

* Of course the flower that we now call larkspur. I have attributed this charming song (the bridal song from the Two Noble Kinsmen) to Fletcher;—but it may belong to a still greater poet, for certainly Shakspeare was art and part in that beautiful tragedy.

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GHOST STORIES.

SUPERSTITION has fallen woefully into decay in our enlightened country. Sunday schools and spinning jennies, steam engines and Mac Adam roads, to say nothing of that mightiest and most diffusive of all powers, the Press, have chased away the spirit of credulity, as ghosts are said to be scared by the dawn, so that if a second Sir Thomas Browne were to appear amongst us we should be forced to send him to Germany for that class of "Vulgar Errors," the old saws and nursery legends, which once formed a sort of supplement to the national faith, an apocrypha as ancient and as general as our language. Not only have we discarded the more gross and gloomy creations of an ignorant fear, the wizards, witches, and dæmons of the middle ages, but we have also divested ourselves of the more genial and every-day phantasies, the venerable and conventional errors—pleasant mistakes at least, if mistakes they were—which succeeded to them. Who now hails his good fortune if he meet two magpies, or bewails his evil destiny if he see but one? Who is in or out of spirits according as the concave cinder which does him the honour to jump from the fire on his foot be long or round—a coffin or a purse? Who looks in the candles for expected letters, or searches the tea-cups for coming visitors? Who shrinks from being helped to salt as if one were offering him arsenic, or is wretched if a knife and fork be laid across his plate? Who if his neighbour chance to sneeze thinks it a bounden duty to cry God bless him? Who tells his dreams o'mornings, and observes that they come true by contraries? Who, now that Sir Walter disclaims it, hath faith in the stars? Nobody.

It was not so sixty or seventy years ago. Then the nation was a believing nation, and the world was a believing world. Even Frederick and his philosophical court (I mean him of

Prussia, called the Great) held, if we may trust M. Thiebault's very amusing book "Mes Souvenirs," as comfortable a share of these minor articles of faith as their more orthodox neighbours. M. de Kleist, for instance, and a whole band of young spendthrifts ruined themselves by Alchemy, which they pursued with the assistance of an adept, with sacrifices to the devil, and as many suffumigations as Dousterswivel; the Marquis d'Argens had the infirmity of not enduring to be one of thirteen at table; M. Laméthrie, a professed atheist, crossed himself like a good Catholic whenever it thundered, or was likely to thunder; the Princess Amelia, as staunch a philosopher as the best of them, believed *tout de bon* in fortune-telling and astrology; the Queen Ulrica of Sweden, another of Frederick's sisters, lent herself to the miracles of Emanuel Swedenborg;* and the great king himself is violently suspected of sharing the fortune-telling faith of his sister Amelia, and even of suffering the predictions with which she furnished him to influence the conduct of his warlike operations.

Now, without pretending to compete with this right royal superstition, inasmuch as I neither regulate my actions by fortune-tellers, nor believe that dead men are in the habit of holding conversations with the living—except perhaps sometimes in books, I must yet plead guilty to a few old-fashioned irrationalities, half of theory and half of practice. There is

* Mes Souvenirs de vingt ans de sejour à Berlin, tome II. pages 111, et 285. M. Thiebault talking of Swedenborg relates a curious story of a conversation which that visionary held, or pretended to hold, with a certain dead Baron, whose wife being much pestered by a creditor whom she knew to be paid, commissioned Swedenborg to inquire of the defunct what he had done with the receipt. The deceased Baron replied, that being engaged in reading Bayle at the moment the paper was delivered to him, he had placed it between the leaves of such a volume at such a page, and the receipt was found there accordingly. This story much resembles Wandering Willy's tale in Redgauntlet, and was perhaps the origin of that fine legend.

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no analyzing a folly of this sort, it runs away when one attempts to clutch it like a drop of quicksilver; but it is easily defined by instances. I had rather not spill the salt, for example, unless I can slily throw a pinch over my left shoulder; and I had rather not see the new moon through a window; and I have gone all day with a stocking the wrong side without, rather than forfeit the good fortune attributed to that lucky accident by turning my hose; and although not generally addicted to the consulting of small oracles, such as the Virgilian lots, and cards, and so forth, yet I can so far sympathize with the feeling as to understand why, during his exile in Siberia, poor Kotzebue (those Germans are pretty believers) used to play by himself every night at *la grande patience*, and go to bed hopeful or despairing according as he had won or lost at his solitary game. Not that I have any real faith in such nonsense either—be sure to remember that, courteous reader—nothing like a real genüine honest faith—only a sort of sneaking kindness for the old foolery—besides, one likes to meet with it now and then as a rarity, to sympathize with or laugh at according to circumstances.

This is a pleasure that seldom falls in my way. We have the ill luck to live in a very polished neighbourhood near a large manufacturing town, not far from London, and with a great road running through the village. We have a Free School of our own; and a National School, and a Lancasterian School close at hand; a public-house where they take in two newspapers, and a parish clerk who reads Cobbett. In a word, we are a civilized people, I grieve to say it, a generation of wiseacres. At present we have not credulity enough amongst us to maintain a gipsy fortune-teller. My observations of this sort are all retrospective;—nothing better than recollections, dating at least twenty years back, before the lightning of universal education (for really it did burst upon us like a storm) had astonished and illuminated the world.

The last true believer of my acquaintance was a young

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farmer called Peter Hodges, who having luckily had a father before him was well to do in the world, and was, at the particular period of which I speak, (some where about Candlemas-tide in the year nine,) paying suit and service to the fair Kate Butler, daughter of old Simon Butler the bricklayer of Aberleigh, and one of the prettiest girls in the parish.

Now Peter was of that order of suitors with whom fathers are generally better pleased than their daughters, especially when those fathers are, as was the case with our good Mason, thrifty and cautious, and mindful of the main chance, and the daughters, like Kate, thoughtless and open-hearted. He, Peter Hodges, was a tall, lathy, awkward figure, with a boyish—I had almost said girlish—countenance, fair, pale, and freckled, and an expression so remarkably vacant and simple that nobody could see him without being tempted to ask Macbeth's uncivil question, "Where got'st thou that goose look?" His motion was weak and shambling; as if his long thin limbs were unable to support his long thin body. Even his straight light hair stuck up and stuck out, and waved abroad with a flickering motion, like flax upon a distaff, adding ten-fold to the helpless silliness of his aspect. Silly he looked, and silly he was; so silly that in conversation, as his fair mistress was wont to assert, the very magpie had the advantage of him, inasmuch as she, when a stranger said, "How d'ye do, Mag?" would answer, "What's that to you, Sir?" whereas Peter when thus addressed only opened his mouth and stared, and said nothing.

No such accusation could be brought against Kate, a lively spirited girl, whose beauty owed half its reputation to the quickness of mind and the light and joyous temperament, which danced in her eyes, played in her smiles, and gave a singular charm to the mingled archness and innocence of her rustic merriment. Kate had plenty to say for herself at all times, and was in truth almost equally agreeable to look at or to listen to.

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So unluckily thought Peter Hodges. Every evening through the winter, from Michaelmas to New-year's day, and from New-year's day to Candlemas, did that indefatigable suitor present himself at the Mason's cottage, until Dame Butler, whose domestic economy had at first been a good deal discomposed by the honour of the young farmer's visits, began from mere habit to mind him no more than a joint stool, and till poor Kate grew so weary of the sight of him, that she used to lock herself into her own little room and go to bed without her supper, purely to get out of his way.

Now this was an affront which our imperturbable suitor bore with exemplary patience; but for which the contumacious damsel received sundry serious reproofs from her good father, the little Mason; who reminded her that not only did Farmer Hodges take the trouble to walk two miles every night to look at her baby-face, but that it was not many persons who would like to pass the Nursery corner of a dark winter's night. "I never saw any thing there myself," continued Master Butler, "but all the parish knows it's haunted, and my grandmother, rest her soul! got strangely scared there, in her younger days, by a ghost all in white, and of a surprising stature. The farmer thought he saw it last night," added the man of mortar; "he came in quite flustrated like, with his hair right on end upon his head, and making as much noise with his breath, as you are doing with those bellows,—as if coals did not burn out fast enough without such wastefulness," added the angry father, passing with great rapidity from one subject of objurgation to another; "the fire's a good fire, and nobody but an extravagant hussy would think of blowing it after that fashion."

"Mother ordered me to heat the irons," replied the culprit meekly; "but did Farmer Hodges really see the ghost, father? Do you think it was the ghost? Did you see any signs of it?"

"Why, no," responded the little Mason; "I can't say that I did. I took my hat down from the nail, and set out to see

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but just at our gate I met young Joe Appleton of the mill—I wonder what he was doing about here so late," muttered the knight of the hod, again flying from his subject and casting a keen glance at his daughter, who blushed and fidgeted, and busied herself in laying down the irons before the fire, and at last spoke timidly.

"But the ghost, father? Had he seen the ghost?"

"He? no! He said, if there's any truth in the chap, that the only thing to be seen at the Nursery corner, when he came by, was Hester Hewit's white cow, looking over a gate. What's the silly baggage laughing at now?" added the provoked father still more testily. "If Farmer Hodges gets another such fright, I should not wonder at his flying the country altogether, or taking up with that bouncing gawky wench Madge Jenkins—She'd be glad enough to marry him. —There's not a man in Aberleigh better to pass in the world; and he to slip through our fingers from a silly jade's perverseness! It's enough to drive one beside oneself,"—and off walked the little Mason, muttering as he went, "I can't think what business Joe Appleton had about my place last night; if I catch him there again I'll trounce him."

Kate watched her father out with eyes dancing, cheeks dimpling, and her whole countenance lighted up with merriment and pleasure. "So! he's afraid of the Nursery corner?" thought the saucy damsel to herself; and then with a transition almost as rapid as those which rushed through the mind of the man of bricks,—"Poor Joe Appleton!" thought she, "he's not of a sort to be trounced or frightened by ghost or mortal! To think of his coming into father's way though! Well!" sighed the pretty maiden; "well!" and with that philosophical exclamation, and a shake of the head as comprehensive as Lord Burleigh's, she proceeded in her preparation for the ironing.

The Nursery corner was, to say truth, as suitable a spot for a ghost to abide in as heart could desire. It was an old

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three-cornered, straggling plantation of dark, dismal Scotch firs; and was surrounded on the sides next the road by decayed park-paling, through the gaps in which were seen patches of wild underwood, and half-dead furze-bushes, intersecting the withered grass which grew at the foot of the trees. This irregular and melancholy collection of rugged and dingy evergreens occupied the corner, where a narrow, winding, gloomy lane, which led to the more populous part of the village, turned somewhat suddenly into a small wild common, on the skirts of which stood the Mason's neat dwelling, a cottage of his own erection, with an ample garnishing of out-houses and pig-styes, and a tolerable garden cribbed from the waste.

Every old woman had a legend upon the subject, of which there were as many different versions as there were speakers, and every child shrank from passing the haunted corner; but neither Kate nor her father or mother had even seen the spectre, although such near neighbours to his ghostship. None of them had ever seen the apparition; and such is the force of habit, that, sooth to say, they thought little of the matter. Master Butler, indeed, occasionally mentioned the story with some respect; partly out of veneration to his deceased grandmother, of blessed memory, of whom the ghost might in some sort be accounted the personal, or rather the impersonal acquaintance; partly because the fear of the apparition served every now and then as an affectionate and plausible pretext to keep his woman-kind at home after sunset; though I cannot discover that his awe of the supernatural was ever allowed to interfere with his own hebdomadal visits to the Saturday night's club at the Rose.

The night following the adventure of the white cow, a small party were assembled in the tap-room of that respectable hostelry, enjoying the warmth and brightness of a clear wood fire, all the more for its contrast with the frosty air without, for the spring was backward, and the evening cold. It was not a club night, and after two or three labourers had had

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their pint, and departed, the company consisted of an old Chelsea Pensioner, a relique of the American war, and a man of importance in the village, being as battered and as good-humoured a veteran as ever smoked a pipe; of Jem the keeper; and Will the blacksmith; and lastly, of the jolly host and his comely wife.

The well-thumbed county paper had been honestly gone through by this select party; who had discussed past debates, and coming assizes, lists of births, deaths, and marriages; two murders, a battle, and a great chancery suit, with a good deal of local intelligence by way of interlude,—all seasoned by certain piquant remarks of the Pensioner, a joker by profession, and a privileged man amongst high and low, who liked the old red coat, some-deal the worse for wear, the empty sleeve, the long venerable white locks, the weather-beaten cheek, and the expression "civil but sly" of his bright blue eyes, and merry but withered countenance. A pause had ensued in their "country cracks," when Jem the keeper, a coxcomb in his way, pulled out his handsome watch and seals with the self-satisfied air that betokens a new acquisition, and starting as he proclaimed the hour, declared "that he could not stay another minute for that wild chap, Joe Appleton. He must be going home; and if the mad Miller called at the Rose, they must tell him that he had waited till he could wait no longer, and was gone. He could not tell what was come to Joe Appleton. He had not seen him he did not know when, till the morning before, and then he made the appointment, which he had broken now. He could not imagine what was come to him!"

"Pray were you ever in love, Jem?" asked the veteran, laying his hand on the keeper's shoulder as he passed him.

"In love! Oh yes!—No!—I believe not—I can't tell," replied the keeper, repenting the frankness of his first avowal, and trying to retract his confession.

"Stick to your first answer, my boy," said the old soldier,

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"that's the true one. You have been in love yourself, and therefore can give a shrewd guess at what ails Joe Appleton. The poor lad's in love too."

"Ay, with pretty Kate of the Nursery corner," quoth mine hostess.

"Her father says she's to marry Long Peter Hodges," rejoined mine host. "But in Heaven's name what's that?" added he, interrupting himself, and going towards the door, at which some one was knocking with a most prodigious din. "Who's that beating at the good oak panels as if he would beat them out?" continued the astonished landlord, undoing the lock, and admitting the clamorous applicant, who staggered faintly towards the group at the fire-place.

"Why, Farmer Hodges! was it you that made this clatter? I thought you had been a quieter body," said the Pensioner; "What's the matter, man? I did not think it had been in him to make so much noise. He looks quite scared," added the veteran.

And Peter, his hair on end, and his face whiter than his shirt, sank into a low wicker chair by the fire, and began rocking himself to and fro, as if he were nursing a baby.

"He looks for all the world as if he had seen a ghost," pursued the old man.

And Peter started and looked round him, as if he saw it then.

"Where was it, lad? At the Nursery corner?"

And Peter's teeth chattered at the sound.

"Ah, they are sad things, those ghosts," continued the veteran, as Peter, rejecting the ale offered to him by the host and the brandy tendered by the hostess, sank back in his wicker chair, looking very likely to faint away. "They are sad things, those ghosts," said the old man in a sympathizing tone. "Better not cross them! I had my own troubles in that way, when I was a youngster. Did you never hear me tell of it, Master Hodges?* If it had not been for that ghost

* Vide note at the end of the story.

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which came across us when I was upon guard in America, I should have saved General Prescott from being taken, and have been made a corporal upon the spot. A corporal! by Jove I should have been a general myself by this time, if that confounded ghost story had not come over me and stopped my preferment. Ghosts are plaguy things any how, especially if you cross them."

"What! did you ever see a ghost in America? a real ghost?" said a voice from behind, and Joe Appleton, who had entered unperceived in the bustle, advanced towards the veteran; "a real, actual, bonâ fide ghost?"

"Why should not I as well as he!" replied our scarlet friend. Then looking at Joe more closely, "Ah! ah! man! I see how it is now! you have been playing the ghost yonder yourself, for the sake of your pretty sweetheart;" added he in a whisper, regarding the miller's hat, jacket, and trousers, all white with the flower of the mill, and catching hold of a bundle which he held under his arm. "I see how it is! And I'll take care of Kate's sheet—it is hers, I suppose?" Joe nodded. "And do you wipe the flour from your face and go your ways with Jem the keeper, for though yon body's well nigh stupified with the fright, it 's better to run no risk. And now they're getting him to drink the brandy, what sense he has will come back again. "Did I see a ghost, boy?" pursued the old man, as he was letting Joe Appleton out of the house door; "did I see a ghost in America? Ay, just such a one as Master Hodges has seen to night! Just such a one as thyself, my lad! Get along with ye, and leave me to frighten Long Peter out of passing the Nursery corner; Kate's too good and too pretty for him, if he were as rich again," continued the old man to himself, as he joined the luckless farmer, (who sat still half unconscious by the fire-side,) and applied himself seriously to the business of consolation and mystification, taking upon him to compound two tumblers of stiff toddy, and so ordering his discourse whilst discussing them, that

Peter left the Rose more certain that he had seen a ghost than he was when he entered it, and declared that he would never pass the Nursery corner again for love or money.

In about a twelvemonth young Joe Appleton of the mill married the Mason's pretty daughter with the consent of all parties; and in spite of the ups and downs of life, which they have shared with their neighbours, neither of them has, I believe, ever found cause to repent their union. The good old Pensioner is dead; Long Peter is gone away; and the world is grown so wise, that the very children laugh at the terrors of the Nursery corner; and it would be impossible for a village maiden to frighten away a disagreeable lover by a ghost story now—even if she had Mrs. Radcliffe's genius for the romantic and the horrible.

NOTE.—The following characteristic and national narrative contains the American version of the Ghost Story in question. The remarkable facts attending the capture of General Prescott are certainly true, being attested not only by my friend the veteran, but corroborated by some near relations of that brave officer, who remembered the story as current in the family. It appears to have been one of those daring exploits which succeed by their own exceeding boldness, and are practicable only because they appear impossible. Certainly, if the notion of a ghost had not come across the English sentinel, the American adventurers would have had the worst of the fray.

Narrative of the Surprise and Capture of Maj. Gen. Richard Prescott, of the British Army, together with his Aid-de-camp, Maj. Barrington, by a party of American soldiers, under Maj. Wm. Barton, July 9th, 1777.

In the month of November, 1776, Major General Lee was surprised and taken prisoner by a detachment of British troops.—With a view to procure the exchange of that valuable officer, William Barton, then a Major in the Rhode-Island line, in the service of the continental Congress, and one of the most daring and patriotic soldiers of the revolution, projected the bold and adventurous expedition which is the subject of the following narrative.

Some months elapsed, after the capture of General Lee, before an opportunity offered of effecting the object which Major Barton had in view. In

the month following that of the capture of General Lee, the enemy took possession of the islands of Rhode Island, Canonicut, and Prudence. Major Barton was then stationed at Tiverton; and for some months anxiously watched the motions of the enemy, with but feeble prospect of obtaining the opportunity he desired. At length, on the 20th June, 1777, a man of the name of Coffin, who made his escape from the British, was seized by some of the American troops, and carried to Major Barton's quarters. Major Barton availed himself of the opportunity to inquire respecting the disposition of the British forces. Coffin, on examination, stated that General Prescott had established his head-quarters on the west side of Rhode Island, and described minutely the situation of the house in which he resided, which he said was owned by Mr. Pering. His account was a few days afterwards corroborated by a deserter from the ranks of the enemy.—Major Barton was now confirmed in his belief of the practicability of effecting his favourite object—but serious obstacles were first to be encountered and removed.—Neither his troops nor their commander had been long inured to service; and the intended enterprise was of a nature as novel as it was hazardous. Besides, Major Barton was aware that the undertaking, should it prove unsuccessful, would be pronounced rash and unadvised, and in its consequences, though his life should be preserved, would be followed by degradation and disgrace. Moreover, to involve in the consequences of an enterprise, devised and undertaken without previous consultation with his superiors in rank, the interest and perhaps the lives of a portion of his brave countrymen, was a subject that excited reflections calculated to damp the ardour and appal the courage of the bravest minds. Still, however, upon mature reflection, aided by a consciousness that his only motive was the interest of his country, he resolved to hazard his reputation and life in the attempt.

The regiment to which Major Barton was attached was commanded by Colonel Stanton, a respectable and wealthy farmer in Rhode Island, who, in the spirit of the times, had abandoned the culture of his farm, and the care of his family, and put at hazard his property and his life, in defence of his country. To this gentleman Major Barton communicated his plan, and solicited permission to carry it into execution. Colonel Stanton readily authorized him "to attack the enemy when and where he pleased." Several officers in the confidence of Major Barton were then selected from the regiment, for the intended expedition, on whose abilities and bravery he could rely: these were Captain Samuel Philips, Lieutenant James Porter, Lieutenant Joshua Babcock, Ensign Andrew Stanton, and John Wilcox. (Capt. — Adams subsequently volunteered his services, and took an active part in the enterprise.) These gentlemen were informed by Major Barton that he had in contemplation an enterprise which would

be attended with great personal hazard to himself and his associates; but which, if success attended it, would be productive of much advantage to the country. Its particular object, he stated, would be seasonably disclosed to them. It was at their option to accept or decline his invitation to share with him in the dangers, and, as he trusted, in the glory that would attend the undertaking. The personal bravery of Major Barton had been previously tested; and such was the esteem and confidence which he had acquired among the officers under his command, that without insisting upon a previous development of his plans, his proposal was immediately accepted.—Major Barton experienced more difficulty in obtaining the necessary number of boats, as there were but two in the vicinity. But this difficulty, though it caused a few days' delay, was at length obviated, and five whale boats were procured and equipped for service. Major Barton had purposely postponed procuring the necessary number of men until the last moment, from an apprehension that their earlier selection might excite suspicion, and defeat the object of their enterprise. Desirous that his little band might be composed entirely of volunteers, the whole regiment was now ordered upon parade. In a short but animated address, Major Barton informed the soldiers that he projected an expedition against the enemy, which could be effected only by the heroism and bravery of those who should attend him; that he desired the voluntary assistance of about forty of their number, and directed those "who would hazard their lives in the enterprise to advance two paces in front." Without *one exception* or *a moment's hesitation* the *whole* regiment advanced.—Major Barton, after bestowing upon the troops the applause they merited, and stating that he required the aid of but a small portion of their number, commenced upon the right, and, passing along the lines, selected from the regiment, to the number of thirty-six, those who united to bravery and discipline a competent knowledge of seamanship for the management of the boats. Having thus obtained an adequate number of officers and men, and every thing being ready, the party, on the 4th of July, 1777, embarked from Tiverton for Bristol. While crossing Mount Hope Bay, there arose a severe storm of thunder and rain, which separated three boats from that of their commander. The boat containing Major Barton, and one other, arrived at Bristol soon after midnight. Major Barton proceeded to the quarters of the commanding officer, where he found a deserter who had just made his escape from the enemy at Rhode Island. From this man he learned that there had been no alteration for the last few days in the position of the British. On the morning of the 5th, the remaining boats having arrived, Major Barton with his officers went to Hog Island, not far distant from Bristol, and within view of the British encampment and shipping. It was at this place

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that he disclosed to his officers the particular object of the enterprise, his reasons for attempting it, and the part each was to perform. Upon reconnoitring the position of the enemy, it was thought impracticable, without great hazard of capture, to proceed directly from Bristol to the head-quarters of the British general. It was determined, therefore, to make *Warwick Neck*, a place opposite to the British encampment, but at a greater distance than Bristol, the point from which they should depart immediately for Rhode Island. The most inviolable secrecy was enjoined upon his officers by Major Barton, and the party returned to Bristol.

On the evening of the sixth, about nine o'clock, the little squadron again sailed, and, crossing Naraganset Bay, landed on Warwick Neck. On the 7th, the wind changing to E. N. E. brought on a storm, and retarded their plan. On the 9th, the weather being pleasant, it was determined to embark for the island. The boats were now numbered, and the place of every officer and soldier assigned. At 9 o'clock in the evening Major Barton assembled his party around him, and in an address, in which were mingled the feelings of the soldier and the man, he disclosed to them the object of the enterprise. He did not attempt to conceal the danger and difficulties that would inevitably attend the undertaking: nor did he forget to remind them, that should their efforts be followed by success, they would be entitled to, and would receive, the grateful acknowledgments of their country. "It is probable," said he, "that some of us may not survive the daring attempt; but I ask you to hazard no dangers which will not be *shared* with you by your commander; and I pledge you my honour, that in every difficulty and danger I will take the lead." He received the immediate and unanimous assurance of the whole party, that they would follow, wherever their beloved commander should lead them. Major Barton then, reminding them how much the success of the enterprise depended upon their strict attention to orders, directed that each individual should confine himself to his particular seat in the boat assigned him, and that not a syllable should be uttered by any one. He instructed them, as they regarded their character as patriots and soldiers, that in the hour of danger they should be firm, collected, and resolved fearlessly to encounter the dangers and difficulties that might assail them. He concluded by offering his fervent petition to the Great King of armies, that he would smile upon their intended enterprise, and crown it with success. The whole party now proceeded to the shore.—Major Barton had reason to apprehend that he must be discovered in his passage from the main to Rhode Island, by some of the ships of war that lay at a small distance from the shore. He therefore directed the commanding officer of the port at Warwick Neck, that if he heard the report of *three* distinct muskets, to send the boats to the north end of Prudence Island to his

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aid. The whole party now took possession of the boats in the manner directed. That which contained Major Barton was posted in front, with a pole about ten feet long in her stern, to the end of which was attached a handkerchief, in order that his boat might be distinguished from the others, that none might go before it. In this manner they proceeded between the Islands of Prudence and Patience, in order that they might not be seen by the shipping of the enemy that lay off against Hope Island.—While passing the north end of Prudence Island, they heard from the sentinels on board the shipping of the enemy the cry of "all's well." As they approached the shore of Rhode Island, a noise like the running of horses was heard, which threw a momentary consternation over the minds of the whole party; but in strict conformity to the orders issued, not a word was spoken by any one. A moment's reflection satisfied Major Barton of the utter impossibility that his designs could be known by the enemy, and *he pushed boldly for the shore.* Apprehensive that if discovered the enemy might attempt to cut off his retreat, Major Barton ordered one man to remain in each boat and be prepared for departure at a moment's warning. The remainder of the party landed without delay. The reflections of Major Barton at this interesting moment were of a nature the most painful. The lapse of a few hours would place him in a situation in the highest degree gratifying to his ambition, or overwhelm him in the ruin in which his rashness would involve him. In the solemn silence of the night, and on the shores of the enemy, he paused a moment to consider a plan which had been projected and matured amidst the bustle of a camp, and in a place of safety. The night was excessively dark; and a stranger to the country, his sole reliance upon a direct and expeditious movement to the head-quarters of the British General, so essential to success, rested upon the imperfect information he had acquired from deserters from the enemy! Should he surprise and secure General Prescott, he was aware of the difficulties that would attend his conveyance to the boat; the probability of an early and fatal discovery of his design by the troops on the Island; and even should he succeed in reaching the boats, it was by no means improbable that the alarm might be seasonably given to the shipping, to prevent his retreat to the main. But regardless of circumstances, which even then would have afforded an apology for a hasty retreat, he resolved at all hazards to attempt the accomplishment of his design.

To the head-quarters of General Prescott, about a mile from the shore, the party, in five divisions, now proceeded in silence. There was a door on the south, the east, and west sides of the house in which he resided. The first division was ordered to advance upon the south door, the second on the west, and the third on the east, the fourth to guard the road, and

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the fifth to act on emergencies. In their march they passed the guard-house of the enemy on their left, and on their right a house occupied by a company of cavalry, for the purpose of carrying with expedition the orders of the General to remote parts of the Island. On arriving at the head-quarters of the enemy, as the gate of the front yard was opened they were challenged by the sentinel on guard. The party was at the distance of about twenty-five yards from the sentinel, but a row of trees partially concealed them from his view, and prevented him from determining their number. No reply was made to the challenge of the sentinel, and the party proceeded on in silence. The sentinel again demanded, "Who comes there?" "Friends," replied Barton. "Friends," said the sentinel, "advance and give the countersign."

Major Barton, affecting to be angry, said to the sentinel, who was now near him, "D— you, we have no countersign—have you seen any rascals to-night?" and before the sentinel could determine the character of those who approached him, Major Barton had seized his musket, told him he was a prisoner, and threatened in case of noise or resistance to put him to instant death. The poor fellow was so terrified, that upon being demanded if his General was in the house, he was, for some time, unable to give any answer. At length, in a faltering voice, he replied that he was. By this time each division having taken its station, the south door was burst open by the direction of Major Barton, and the division there stationed, with their commander at their head, rushed into the head-quarters of the General. At this critical moment one of the British soldiers effected his escape, and fled to the quarters of the main guard. This man had no article of clothing upon him but a shirt, and having given the alarm to the sentinel on duty, passed on to the quarters of the cavalry, which was more remote from the head-quarters of the General. The sentinel roused the main guard, who were instantly in arms, and demanded the cause of the alarm. He stated the information which had been given him by the soldier, which appeared so incredible to the sergeant of the guard, that he insisted he had seen a ghost. The sentinel, to whom the account of his General's capture appeared quite as incredible as to his commanding officer, admitted that the messenger was clothed in white; and after submitting to the jokes of his companions as a punishment for his credulity, was ordered to resume his station, while the remainder of the guard retired to their quarters. It was fortunate for Major Barton and his brave followers that the alarm given by the soldier was considered groundless. Had the main guard proceeded without delay to the relief of their commanding General, his rescue certainly, and probably the destruction of the party, would have been the consequence.

The first room Major Barton entered was occupied by Mr. Pering, who

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positively denied that General Prescott was in his house. He next entered the room of his son, who was equally obstinate with his father in denying that the General was there. Major Barton then proceeded to other apartments, but was still disappointed in the object of his search. Aware that longer delay might defeat the object of his enterprise, Major Barton resorted to stratagem to facilitate his search. Placing himself at the head of the stair-way, and declaring his resolution to secure the General dead or alive, he ordered his soldiers to set fire to the house. The soldiers were preparing to execute his orders, when a voice which Major Barton at once suspected to be the General's, demanded, what's the matter. Major Barton rushed to the apartment from whence the voice proceeded, and discovered an elderly man just rising from his bed, and clapping his hands upon his shoulder, demanded of him if he was General Prescott. He answered, "Yes, sir." "You are my prisoner, then," said Major Barton. "I acknowledge that I am," said the General. In a moment General Prescott found himself half-dressed, in the arms of the soldiers, who hurried him from the house. In the mean time Major Barrington, the aid to General Prescott, discovering that the house was attacked by the *rebels*, as the enemy termed them, leaped out of the window of his bed-chamber, and was immediately secured a prisoner. General Prescott, supported by Major Barton and one of his officers, and attended by Major Barrington and the sentinel, proceeded, surrounded by soldiery, to the shore. Upon seeing the five little boats, General Prescott, who knew the position of the British shipping, appeared much confused, and, turning to Major Barton, inquired if he commanded the party. On being informed that he did, he expressed a hope that no personal injury was intended him, and Major Barton assured the General of his protection while he remained under his control.

The General had travelled from head-quarters to the shore in his waistcoat, small-clothes, and slippers. A moment was now allowed him to complete his dress, while the party were taking possession of the boats. The General was placed in the boat with Major Barton, as they proceeded for the main.

They had not got far from the Island, when the discharge of cannon and three sky-rockets gave the signal for alarm. It was fortunate for the party that the enemy on board the shipping were ignorant of the cause of it, who might easily have cut off their retreat. The signal of alarm excited the apprehensions of Major Barton and his brave associates, and redoubled their exertions to reach the point of their destination before they could be discovered. They succeeded, and soon after day-break landed at Warwick Neck, near the point of their departure, after an absence of *six hours and a half*.

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General Prescott turned towards the Island, and observing the ships of war, remarked to Major Barton, "Sir, you have made a bold push to-night."—"We have been fortunate," replied the hero. An express was immediately sent forward to Major General Spencer, to Providence, communicating the success which had attended the enterprise. Not long afterwards, a coach arrived which had been despatched by General Spencer to convey General Prescott and his aid-de-camp prisoners for Providence. They were accompanied by Major Barton, who related to General Spencer, on their arrival, the particulars of the enterprise, and received from that officer the most grateful acknowledgments for the signal services he had rendered his country.

MATTHEW SHORE.

NEXT in beauty to the view over the Loddon at Aberleigh, is that from Lanton Bridge up and down the clear and winding Kennet, and this present season (the latter end of April) is perhaps the time of year which displays to the greatest advantage that fine piece of pastoral scenery. And yet it is a species of beauty difficult to convey to the reader. There is little to describe but much to feel; the sweet and genial repose of the landscape harmonizes so completely with the noon-tide sunshine and the soft balmy air. The river, bright and glassy, glides in beautiful curves through a rich valley of meadow land, the view on one side of the bridge terminating at the distance of a couple of miles by the picturesque town of B. with its old towers and spires, whilst on the other the stream seems gradually to lose itself amongst the richly wooded and finely undulating grounds of Lanton Park.

But it is in the meadows themselves that the real charm is to be found: the fresh sprouting grass, bordered with hedgerows just putting on their tenderest green, dotted with wild patches of willow trees and clumps of noble elms, gay with

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the golden marsh marigold and the elegant fritillary;* alive with bees and butterflies, and the shining tribe of water insects; and musical with the notes of a countless variety of birds, who cease singing, or whom we cease to listen to, (it comes exactly to the same thing,) the moment the nightingale begins her matchless song. Here and there, too, farm-houses and cottages, half hidden by cherry orchards just in their fullest bloom, come cranking into the meadows; and farther in the distance chimney-tops with curling wreaths of blue smoke, or groups of poplar, never seen but near dwellings, give a fresh interest to the picture by the unequivocal signs of human habitation and human sympathy.

In one of the nearest of these poplar clumps—not above half a mile off, if it were possible for any creature except a bird to pass the wide deep ditches which intersect these water meadows, but which, by thridding the narrow and intricate lanes that form the only practicable route, we contrive to make nearly six times as long;—in that island of spiral poplars and gigantic fruit trees, with one corner of the roof just peeping amongst the blossomy cherry boughs, stands the comfortable abode of my good friend Matthew Shore, to whose ample farm a large portion of these rich meadows forms an appendage of no trifling value.

Matthew is of an old yeomanry family, who have a pedigree of their own, and are as proud of having been for many generations the hereditary tenants of the owners of Lanton Park, as they themselves may be of having been for more centuries than I choose to mention the honoured possessors of that fair estate. Excellent landlords, and excellent tenants, both parties are, I believe, equally pleased with the connexion, and would no more think of dissolving the union, which time

* The country people call this beautiful plant the Turkey-egg flower, and indeed the chequered pendant blossoms do, both in their shape and in their mottled tinting, bear some resemblance to the dappled eggs of that stately bird.

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and mutual service have cemented so closely, than of breaking through the ties of near relationship; although my friend Matthew, having no taste for agricultural pursuits, his genius for the cultivation of land having broken out in a different line, has devolved on his younger brother Andrew the entire management and superintendence of the farm.

Matthew and Andrew Shore are as unlike as two brothers well can be in all but their strong manly affection for each other, and go on together all the better for their dissimilarity of taste and character. Andrew is a bluff, frank, merry Benedict, blest in a comely bustling wife, and five rosy children; somewhat too loud and boisterous in his welcomings, which come upon one like a storm, but delightful in his old-fashioned hospitality and his hearty good-humour; for the rest, a good master, a steady friend, a jovial neighbour, and the best farmer and most sagacious dealer to be found in the country side. He must be a knowing hand who takes in Andrew Shore. He is a bold rider too, when the fox-hounds happen to come irresistibly near; and is famous for his breed of cocking spaniels, and for constantly winning the yeomanry cup at the B. coursing meeting. Such is our good neighbour Farmer Shore.

His wife is not a little like her husband; a laughing, bustling, good-humoured woman, famous for the rearing of turkeys and fattening of calves, ruling the servants and children within doors, with as absolute a discretion as that with which he sways the out-door sceptre, and complaining occasionally of the power she likes so well, and which, with an ingratitude not uncommon in such cases, she is pleased to call trouble. In spite of these complaints, however, she is one of the happiest women in the parish, being amongst the very few who are neither troubled by poverty nor finery—the twin pests of the age and country. Her expenses are those of her grandmother's days; she has fourteen-shilling hyson, and double-refined sugar, for any friend who may drop in to tea, and a

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handsome silk gown to wear to Church on Sundays. An annual jaunt to Ascot is all her dissipation, and a taxed cart her sole equipage. Well may Mrs. Shore be a happy woman.

The only spot about the place sacred from her authority, is that which I am come to visit,—the garden; my friend Matthew's territory, in which he spends all his days, and half his nights, and which, in spite of his strong fraternal affection, he certainly loves better than brother or sister, nephew or niece, friend or comrade; better, in short, than he loves any thing else under the sun.

Matthew is an old bachelor of fifty-five, or there-away, with a quick eye, a ruddy cheek, a delightful benevolence of countenance, a soft voice, and a gentle manner. He is just what he seems, the kindest, the most generous, and the best-natured creature under the sun, the universal friend and refuge of servants, children, paupers, and delinquents of all descriptions, who fly to him for assistance and protection in every emergency, and would certainly stun him with their clamorous importunity, if he were not already as deaf as a post.

Matthew is one of the few very deaf people worth talking to. He is what is becoming scarcer every day, a florist of the first order, and of the old school,—not exactly of Mr. Evelyn's time, for in the gardening of that period, although greens were, flowers were not,—but of thirty or forty years back, the reign of pinks, tulips, auriculas, and ranunculuses, when the time and skill of the gardener were devoted to produce, in the highest imaginable perfection, a variety of two or three favoured tribes. The whole of this large garden, for the potatoes and cabbages have been forced to retreat to a nook in the orchard, dug up in their behoof;—the whole ample garden is laid out in long beds, like those in a nursery ground, filled with these precious flowers, of the rarest sorts and in the highest culture; and as I have arrived in the midst of the hyacinth, auricula, and anemone season, with the tulips just

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opening, I may consider myself in great luck to see what is called, in gardening language, "so grand a show." It is worth something, too, to see Matthew's delight, half compounded of vanity and kindness, as he shows them, mixed with courteous offers of seedlings and offsets, and biographical notices of the more curious flowers: "How the stock of this plant came from that noted florist Tom Bonham, the B. tailor, commonly called Tippling Tom, who once refused fifty guineas for three auriculas! and how this tulip was filched" (Matthew tells this in a particularly low and confidential tone) "from a worthy merchant of Rotterdam, by an honest skipper of his acquaintance, who abstracted the root, but left five pounds in the place of it, and afterwards made over the bargain for a couple of pounds more, just to pay him for the grievous bodily fear which he had undergone between the time of this adventure, for there was no telling how the Burgomaster might relish the bargain, and his embarkation in the good schooner the Race-horse of Liverpool."

Perhaps the tulips, especially this pet root, are on the whole Matthew's favourites; but he is a great man at pink shows and melon feasts, and his carnations, particularly those of a sort called "the mount Etna," which seldom comes to good in other hands, as regularly win the plate as Andrew's greyhounds. It is quite edifying to hear him run over the bead-roll of pink names, from Cleopatra to the Glory of New York. The last-mentioned flowers are precisely my object to-day; for I am come to beg some of his old plants, to the great endangerment of my character as a woman of taste, I having, sooth to say, no judgment in pinks, except preferring those which are full of bloom, in which quality these old roots, which he was about to fling away, and which he is giving me with a civil reluctance to put any thing so worthless into my garden, greatly excel the young plants of which he is so proud.

Notwithstanding his love for his own names, some of which are fantastical enough, Matthew wages fierce war against the

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cramp appellations, whether of geraniums or of other plants, introduced latterly, and indeed against all new flowers of every sort whatsoever, comprehending them all under the general denomination of trash. He contrives to get the best and the rarest, notwithstanding, and to make them blow better than any body, and I would lay a wager—Ay, I am right! the rogue! the rogue! What is that in the window but the cactus speciosissimus, most splendid of flowers, with its large ruby cup and its ivory tassels? It is not in bloom yet, but it is showing strong and coming fast. And is not that fellow the scarlet potentilla? And that the last fuschia? And is there such a plant in the county as that newest of all the new cammellias? Ah the rogue! the rogue! He to abuse my geraniums, and call me new-fangled, with four plants in his windows that might challenge the horticultural! And when I laugh at him about it, he'll pretend not to hear, and follow the example of that other great deaf artist,

> "Who shifted his trumpet and only took snuff."

Ah the rogue! the rogue! To think that fickleness should be so ingrafted in man's nature, that even Matthew Shore is not able to resist the contagion, but must fall a flirting with cactuses and cammellias—let the pinks and tulips look to it! The rogue! the rogue!

If the fickleness of man were my first thought, the desire to see the cammellia nearer was the second; and Mrs. Shore appearing in the porch with her clean white apron and her pleasant smile, I followed her through a large, lightsome, bricked apartment, the common room of the family, where the ample hearth, the great chairs in the chimney corner, defended from draughts by green stuff curtains, the massive oak tables, the tall japanned clock, and the huge dresser laden with pewter dishes as bright as silver, gave token of rustic comfort and opulence. Ornaments were not wanting. The dresser was also adorned with the remains of a long-preserved set of

tea-china, of a like rambling pattern, consisting of five cups and seven saucers, a tea-pot, neatly mended, a pitcher-like cream jug, cracked down the middle, and a sugar bason, wanting a handle; with sundry odd plates, delf, blue and white, brown-edged and green-edged, scalloped and plain; and last and choicest, with a grand collection of mugs—always the favourite object of housewifely vanity in every rank of rural life, from Mrs. Shore of Lanton Farm down to her maid Debby. This collection was of a particularly ambitious nature. It filled a row and a half of the long dresser, graduated according to size, like books in a library, the gallons ranking as folios, the half-pints ranging as duodecimos. Their number made me involuntarily repeat to myself two lines from Anstey's inimitable Pleader's Guide, meant to ridicule the fictions of the law, but here turned into a literal truth:

> "First count 's for that with divers jugs,
> To wit, twelve pots, twelve cups, twelve mugs:"

but these jugs were evidently not meant to be profaned by the "certain vulgar drink called toddy," or any other drink. Half-a-dozen plain white ones, rather out of condition, which stood on a side table, were clearly the drudges, the working mugs of the family. The ornamental species, the drone mugs, hung on nails by their handles, and were of every variety of shape, colour, and pattern. Some of the larger ones were adorned with portraits in medallion—Mr. Wilberforce, Lord Nelson, the Duke of Wellington, and Charles Fox. Some were gay with flowers not very like nature. Some had landscapes in red, and one a group of figures in yellow. Others again, and these were chiefly the blues, had patterns of all sorts of intricacy and involution without any visible meaning. Some had borders of many colours; and some, which looked too genteel for their company, had white cameos relieved on a brown ground. Those drinking vessels were full of the antique elegance and grace. I stood admiring them when Mrs.

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Shore called me into the parlour, where the plant I wished to see was placed.

The parlour—oh how incomparably inferior to the kitchen! —was a little low, square, dark box, into which we were shut by a door, painted black, dimly lighted by a casement window, quite filled by the superb cammellia, and rendered even more gloomy by a dark paper of reds and greens, with an orange border. A piece of furniture called a beaufette, open and displaying a collection of glass ware, almost equal to the pewter for age and brightness, to the mugs for variety, and to the china for joinery, a shining round mahogany table, and six hair-bottomed chairs, really seemed to crowd the little apartment; but it was impossible to look at any thing except the splendid plant, with its dark shining leaves, and the pure, yet majestic blossoms reposing on the deep verdure, as a pearly coronet on the glossy locks of some young beauty. Ah! no wonder that the pinks are a little out of favour, or that Matthew stands smiling there in utter oblivion of striped tulip or streaked carnation! such a plant as this would be an excuse for forgetting the whole vegetable creation, and my good friend Matthew (who always contrives to hear the civil things one says of his flowers, however low one may speak, and who is perfectly satisfied by my admiration on the present occasion) has just made me almost as happy as himself, by promising to rear me one of the same sort, after a method of his own discovering, which he assures me brings them to perfection twice as fast as the dawdling modes of the new school. Nothing like an old gardener after all! above all, if he be as kind, as enthusiastic, and as clever, as my friend Matthew Shore.

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INTRODUCTION

TO

THE FIFTH SERIES.*

FAREWELL TO OUR VILLAGE.

Was it the gentle Addison, as quoted by Johnson, or Johnson himself, that tender heart enclosed in a rough rind, who said that he could not part without sorrow from the stump of an old tree that he had known since he was a boy? Whoever said it, gave utterance to one of the deepest and most universal feelings of our common nature. The attractions of novelty are weak and powerless, in comparison with the minute but strong chains of habit, and the moment of separation is that of all others in which, with an amiable illusion, we brighten and magnify the good qualities of the object we leave, whilst we forget or overlook whatever at another time may have displeased us. The last tone is a tone of kindness; the last look a look of regret.

The very words consecrated to parting embody this sentiment: farewell! adieu! good-bye! Why, they are benedictions, tender, solemn benedictions! How poor and trivial, when measured with their intensity, seem the ordinary phrases of meeting: good day! good morrow! how d'ye do? how are you? † These are felt at once to be mere formal ceremonials, sentences of custom, spoken bows and curtseys, as cold and as unmeaning as the compliments at the beginning of a note, or the humble servant at the end of a letter. Even between the most assured friends, there is the same remarkable distinction in manner and in word. We shake hands at meeting, at parting we embrace.

The poets, faithful chroniclers of human feeling, have not failed to resort frequently to a source of sympathy so general and so true: witness the parting of Hector and Andromache in the "tale of Troy divine;" and many of the finest passages in the finest writers, from Homer to Walter Scott. Nay, the feeling itself has made poets, as in the

* [Of the original edition.]

† Mr. Spenser's little poem, "One day Good-bye met How d'ye do?" is a pretty illustration of this difference.

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case of Mary, queen of Scots, whose beautiful verses, "adieu, plaisant pays de France!" may be reckoned amongst the tenderest adieux in any language. Perhaps, at no instant of her most unhappy life did that unfortunate Beauty experience a keener sensation of grief than when sighing forth that farewell! I doubt, indeed, if farewell can be spoken without some sensation of sorrow.

Nevertheless, it is a word that must in the course of events find utterance from us all; and just now it falls to my lot to bid a late and lingering good-bye to the snug nook called Our Village. The word must be spoken. For ten long years, for five tedious volumes, has that most multifarious and most kind personage, the public, endured to hear the history, half real, and half imaginary, of a half imaginary and half real little spot on the sunny side of Berkshire; but all mortal things have an end, and so must my country stories. The longest tragedy has only five acts; and since the days of Clarissa Harlowe, no author has dreamt of spinning out one single subject through ten weary years. I blush to think how much I have encroached on an indulgence, so patient and so kind. Sorry as I am to part from a locality, which has become almost identified with myself, this volume must and shall be the last.

Farewell, then, my beloved village! the long straggling street, gay and bright in this sunny, windy April morning, full of all implements of dirt and noise,—men, women, children, cows, horses, waggons, carts, pigs, dogs, geese, and chickens, busy, merry, stirring little world, farewell! Farewell to the winding up-hill road, with its clouds of dust as horsemen and carriages ascend the gentle eminence, its borders of turf, and its primrosy hedgerows!—Farewell to the breezy common, with its islands of cottages and cottage-gardens; its oaken avenues populous with rooks; its clear waters fringed with gorse, where lambs are straying; its cricket-ground where children already linger, anticipating their summer revelry; its pretty boundary of field and woodland, and distant farms; and latest and best of its ornaments, the dear and pleasant mansion where dwell the neighbours of neighbours, the friends of friends; farewell to ye all! Ye will easily dispense with me, but what I shall do without you, I cannot imagine. Mine own dear village, farewell!

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

THREE-MILE CROSS,
April 9, 1832.

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THE INCENDIARY.

A COUNTRY TALE.

No one that had the misfortune to reside during the last winter in the disturbed districts of the south of England, will ever forget the awful impression of that terrible time. The stilly gatherings of the misguided peasantry amongst the wild hills, partly heath and partly woodland, of which so much of the northern part of Hampshire is composed,—dropping in one by one, and two by two, in the gloom of evening, or the dim twilight of a November morning; or the open and noisy meetings of determined men at noontide in the streets and greens of our Berkshire villages, and even sometimes in the very churchyards, sallying forth in small but resolute numbers to collect money or destroy machinery, and compelling or persuading their fellow-labourers to join them at every farm they visited; or the sudden appearance and disappearance of these large bodies, who sometimes remained together to the amount of several hundreds for many days, and sometimes

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dispersed, one scarcely knew how, in a few hours; their day-light marches on the high road, regular and orderly as those of an army, or their midnight visits to lonely houses, lawless and terrific as the descent of pirates, or the incursions of banditti;—all brought close to us a state of things which we never thought to have witnessed in peaceful and happy England. In the sister island, indeed, we had read of such horrors, but now they were brought home to our very household hearths; we tasted of fear, the bitterest cup that an imaginative woman can taste, in all its agonizing varieties; and felt, by sad experience, the tremendous difference between that distant report of danger, with which we had so often fancied that we sympathized, and the actual presence of danger itself. Such events are salutary, inasmuch as they show to the human heart its own desperate self-deceit. I could not but smile at the many pretty letters of condolence and fellow-feeling which I received from writers who wrote far too well to feel any thing, who most evidently felt nothing; but the smile was a melancholy one—for I recollected how often, not intending to feign, or suspecting that I was feigning, I myself had written such.

Nor were the preparations for defence, however necessary, less shocking than the apprehensions of attack. The hourly visits of bustling parish officers, bristling with importance; (for our village, though in the centre of the insurgents, continued uncontaminated—"faithful amidst the unfaithful found,"—and was, therefore, quite a rallying point for loyal men and true;) the swearing in of whole regiments of petty constables; the stationary watchmen, who every hour, to prove their vigilance, sent in some poor wretch, beggar or match-seller, or rambling child, under the denomination of suspicious persons; the mounted patrol, whose deep "all's well," which ought to have been consolatory, was about the most alarming of all alarming sounds; the soldiers, transported from place to place in carts the better to catch the rogues, whose local knowledge

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gave them great advantage in a dispersal; the grave processions of magistrates and gentlemen on horseback; and, above all, the nightly collecting of arms and armed men within our own dwelling, kept up a continual sense of nervous inquietude.

Fearful, however, as were the realities, the rumours were a hundred-fold more alarming. Not an hour passed, but, from some quarter or other, reports came pouring in of mobs gathering, mobs assembled, mobs marching upon us. Now the high roads were blockaded by the rioters, travellers murdered, soldiers defeated, and the magistrates, who had gone out to meet and harangue them, themselves surrounded and taken by the desperate multitude. Now the artisans—the commons, so to say, of B.—had risen to join the peasantry, driving out the gentry and tradespeople, while they took possession of their houses and property, and only detaining the mayor and aldermen as hostages. Now that illustrious town held loyal, but was besieged. Now the mob had carried the place; and artisans, constables, tradespeople, soldiers, and magistrates, the mayor and corporation included, were murdered to a man, to say nothing of women and children; the market-place running with blood, and the town-hall piled with dead bodies. This last rumour, which was much to the taste of our villagers, actually prevailed for several hours; terrified maid-servants ran shrieking about the house, and every corner of the village street realized Shakspeare's picture of "a smith swallowing a tailor's news."

So passed the short winter's day. With the approach of night came fresh sorrows; the red glow of fires gleaming on the horizon, and mounting into the middle sky; the tolling of bells; and the rumbling sound of the engines clattering along from place to place, and often, too often, rendered useless by the cutting of the pipes after they had begun to play—a dreadful aggravation of the calamity, since it proved that among those who assembled, professedly to help, were to be found

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favourers and abettors of the concealed incendiaries. Oh the horrors of those fires—breaking forth night after night, sudden, yet expected, always seeming nearer than they actually were, and always said to have been more mischievous to life and property than they actually had been ! Mischievous enough they were, Heaven knows ! A terrible and unholy abuse of the most beautiful and comfortable of the elements !—a sinful destruction of the bounties of Providence !—an awful crime against God and man ! Shocking it was to behold the peasantry of England becoming familiarized with this tremendous power of evil—this desperate, yet most cowardly sin !

The blow seemed to fall, too, just where it might least have been looked for,—on the unoffending, the charitable, the kind; on those who were known only as the labourer's friends; to impoverish whom was to take succour, assistance, and protection from the poor. One of the objects of attack in our own immediate neighbourhood was a widow lady, between eighty and ninety; the best of the good, the kindest of the kind. Occurrences like this were in every way dreadful. They made us fear (and such fear is a revengeful passion, and comes near to hate) the larger half of our species. They weakened our faith in human nature.

The revulsion was, however, close at hand. A time came which changed the current of our feelings—a time of retribution. The fires were quenched; the riots were put down; the chief of the rioters were taken. Examination and commitment were the order of the day; the crowded gaols groaned with their overload of wretched prisoners; soldiers were posted at every avenue to guard against possible escape; and every door was watched night and day by miserable women, the wives, mothers, or daughters of the culprits, praying for admission to their unfortunate relatives. The danger was fairly over, and pity had succeeded to fear.

Then, above all, came the special commission: the judges in threefold dignity; the array of counsel; the crowded

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court; the solemn trial; the awful sentence;—all the more impressive, from the merciful feeling which pervaded the government, the counsel, and the court. My father, a very old magistrate, being chairman of the bench, as well as one of the grand jury; and the then high sheriff, with whom it is every way an honour to claim acquaintance, being his intimate friend; I saw and knew more of the proceedings of this stirring time than usually falls to the lot of women, and took a deep interest in proceedings which had in them a thrilling excitement, as far beyond acted tragedy as truth is beyond fiction.

I shall never forget the hushed silence of the auditors, a dense mass of human bodies, the heads only visible, ranged tier over tier to the very ceiling of the lofty hall; the rare and striking importance which that silence and the awfulness of the occasion gave to the mere official forms of a court of justice, generally so hastily slurred over and slightly attended to; the unusual seriousness of the counsel; the watchful gravity of the judges; and, more than all, the appearance of the prisoners themselves, belonging mostly to the younger classes of the peasantry, such men as one is accustomed to see in the fields, on the road, or the cricket-ground, with sunburnt faces, and a total absence of reflection or care, but who now, under the influence of a keen and bitter anxiety, had acquired not only the sallow paleness proper to a prison, but the look of suffering and of thought, the brows contracted and brought low over the eyes, the general sharpness of feature and elongation of countenance, which give an expression of intellect, a certain momentary elevation, even to the commonest and most vacant of human faces. Such is the power of an absorbing passion, a great and engrossing grief. One man only amongst the large number whom I heard arraigned (for they were brought out by tens and by twenties) would, perhaps, under other circumstances, have been accounted handsome; yet a painter would at that moment have found studies in many.

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I shall never forget, either, the impression made on my mind by one of the witnesses. Several men had been arraigned together for machine-breaking. All but one of them had employed counsel for their defence, and under their direction had called witnesses to character, the most respectable whom they could find—the clergy and overseers of their respective parishes, for example,—masters with whom they had lived, neighbouring farmers or gentry, or even magistrates,—all that they could muster to grace or credit their cause. One poor man alone had retained no counsel, offered no defence, called no witness, though the evidence against him was by no means so strong as that against his fellow-prisoners; and it was clear that his was exactly the case in which testimony to character would be of much avail. The defences had ended, and the judge was beginning to sum up, when suddenly a tall gaunt upright figure, with a calm thoughtful brow, and a determined but most respectful demeanour, appeared in the witnesses' box. He was drest in a smock frock, and was clean and respectable in appearance, but evidently poor. The judge interrupted himself in his charge to inquire the man's business; and hearing that he was a voluntary witness for the undefended prisoner, proceeded to question him, when the following dialogue took place. The witness's replies, which seemed to me then, and still do so, very striking from their directness and manliness, were delivered with the same humble boldness of tone and manner that characterized the words.

Judge. "You are a witness for the prisoner, an unsummoned witness?"

"I am, my lord. I heard that he was to be tried to-day, and have walked twenty miles to speak the truth of him, as one poor man may do of another."

"What is your situation in life?"

"A labourer, my lord; nothing but a day-labourer."

"How long have you known the prisoner?"

"As long as I have known any thing. We were play-

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mates together, went to the same school, have lived in the same parish. I have known him all my life."

"And what character has he borne?"

"As good a character, my lord, as a man need work under."

It is pleasant to add, that this poor man's humble testimony was read from the judge's notes, and mentioned in the judge's charge, with full as much respect, perhaps a little more, than the evidence of clergymen and magistrates for the rest of the accused; and that, principally from this direct and simple tribute to his character, the prisoner in question was acquitted.*

To return, however, from my evil habit of digressing (if I may use an Irish phrase) before I begin, and making my introduction longer than my story, a simple sin to which in many instances, and especially in this, I am fain to plead guilty;—to come back to my title and my subject,—I must inform my courteous readers, that the case of arson which attracted most attention and excited most interest in this part

* This anecdote speaks strongly for the misled part of the labourers—by very far the larger part. The fact that follows makes against their deluders. It came before the grand jury; but owing to the merciful plan of the counsel for the crown of trying only for the minor offence of machine-breaking, instead of the capital one of collecting money, was not brought into court, and, of course, escaped the newspapers. A large party of rioters, some two or three hundred, met a clergyman riding at some distance from his own house. They surrounded his horse, caused him to dismount, and made their usual demand of five pounds. The clergyman offered them his purse, containing some silver, declaring he had no more money about him.

"Pshaw!" answered the ringleader, "don't think to put us off with beggarly sixpences! Here's a bit of paper and an inkhorn; write us a draft for the sum on the N. bank. Stop," added he, as the gentleman was perforce preparing to obey him; "stop! you seem to be out of cash; so if you had rather write an order for ten pounds, do; it may save you trouble, and I'll hand you the balance here on the spot."

Of course the accommodation was not accepted; but this was a cool way of transacting business, and affords one proof, amongst many, that the leaders in this affair could not have been common labourers.

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of the country, was the conflagration of certain ricks, barns, and farm buildings, in the occupation of Richard Mayne; and that, not so much from the value of the property consumed, (though that value was considerable,) as on account of the character and situation of the prisoner, whom, after a long examination, the magistrates found themselves compelled to commit for the offence. I did not hear this trial, the affair having occurred in the neighbouring county; and do not, therefore, vouch for "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," as one does when an ear-witness; but the general outline of the story will suffice for our purpose.

Richard Mayne was a wealthy yeoman of the old school, sturdy, boisterous, bold, and kind, always generous, and generally good-natured, but cross-grained and obstinate by fits, and sometimes purse-proud—after the fashion of men who have made money by their own industry and shrewdness. He had married late in life, and above him in station, and had now been for two or three years a widower with one only daughter, a girl of nineteen, of whom he was almost as fond as of his greyhound Mayfly, and for pretty much the same reason—that both were beautiful and gentle, and his own, and both admired and coveted by others—that Mayfly had won three cups, and that Lucy had refused four offers.

A sweet and graceful creature was Lucy Mayne. Her mother, a refined and cultivated woman, the daughter of an unbeneficed clergyman, had communicated, perhaps unconsciously, much of her own taste to her daughter. It is true, that most young ladies, even of her own station, would have looked with great contempt on Lucy's acquirements, who neither played nor drew, and was wholly, in the phrase of the day, unaccomplished; but then she read Shakspeare and Milton, and the poets and prose writers of the Jameses' and Charleses' times, with a perception and relish of their beauty very uncommon in a damsel under twenty; and when her father boasted of his Lucy as the cleverest as well as the pret-

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tiest lass within ten miles, he was not so far wrong as many of his hearers were apt to think him.

After all, the person to whom Lucy's education owed most, was a relation of her mother's, a poor relation, who, being left a widow with two children almost totally destitute, was permitted by Richard Mayne to occupy one end of a small farmhouse, about a mile from the old substantial manorial residence which he himself inhabited, whilst he farmed the land belonging to both. Nothing could exceed his kindness to the widow and her family; and Mrs. Owen, a delicate and broken-spirited woman, who had known better days, and was now left with a sickly daughter and a promising son dependent on the precarious charity of relatives and friends, found in the free-handed and open-hearted farmer and his charming little girl her only comfort. He even restored to her the blessing of her son's society, who had hitherto earned his living by writing for an attorney in the neighbouring town, but whom her wealthy kinsman now brought home to her, and established as the present assistant and future successor of the master of a well-endowed grammar-school in the parish, Farmer Mayne being one of the trustees, and all-powerful with the other functionaries joined in the trust, and the then schoolmaster in so wretched a state of health as almost to insure a speedy vacancy.

In most instances, such an exertion of an assumed rather than a legitimate authority, would have occasioned no small prejudice against the party protected; but Philip Owen was not to be made unpopular, even by the unpopularity of his patron. Gentle, amiable, true, and kind,—kind both in word and deed,—it was found absolutely impossible to dislike him. He was clever, too, very clever, with a remarkable aptitude for teaching, as both parents and boys soon found to their mutual satisfaction; for the progress of one half-year of his instruction equalled that made in a twelvemonth under the old regime. He must also, one should think, have been fond of teaching, for, after a hard day's fagging at Latin and English,

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and writing and accounts, and all the drudgery of a boys' school, he would make a circuit of a mile and a half home in order to give Lucy Mayne a lesson in French or Italian. For a certainty, Philip Owen must have had a strong natural turn for playing the pedagogue, or he never would have gone so far out of his way just to read Fenelon and Alfieri with Lucy Mayne.

So for two happy years matters continued. At the expiration of that time, just as the old schoolmaster, who declared that nothing but Philip's attention had kept him alive so long, was evidently on his death-bed, Farmer Mayne suddenly turned Mrs. Owen, her son, and her sick daughter out of the house, which, by his permission, they had hitherto occupied; and declared publicly, that whilst he held an acre of land in the parish, Philip Owen should never be elected master of the grammar-school—a threat which there was no doubt of his being able to carry into effect. The young man, however, stood his ground; and sending off his mother and sister to an uncle in Wales, who had lately written kindly to them, hired a room at a cottage in the village, determined to try the event of an election, which the languishing state of the incumbent rendered inevitable.

The cause of Farmer Mayne's inveterate dislike to one whom he had so warmly protected, and whose conduct, manners, and temper had procured him friends wherever he was known, nobody could assign with any certainty. Perhaps he had unwittingly trodden on Mayfly's foot, or had opposed some prejudice of her master's—but his general carefulness not to hurt any thing, or offend any body, rendered either of these conjectures equally improbable;—perhaps he had been found only too amiable by the farmer's other pet—those lessons in languages were dangerous things!—and when Lucy was seen at church with a pale face and red eyes, and when his landlord Squire Hawkins's blood hunter was seen every day at Farmer Mayne's door, it became currently reported and confidently be-

lieved, that the cause of the quarrel was a love affair between the cousins, which the farmer was determined to break off, in order to bestow his daughter on the young lord of the manor.

Affairs had been in this posture for about a fortnight, and the old schoolmaster was just dead, when a fire broke out in the rick-yard of Farley Court, and Philip Owen was apprehended and committed as the incendiary! The astonishment of the neighbourhood was excessive; the rector and half the farmers of the place offered to become bail; but the offence was not bailable; and the only consolation left for the friends of the unhappy young man, was the knowledge that the trial would speedily come on, and their internal conviction that an acquittal was certain.

As time wore on, however, their confidence diminished. The evidence against him was terribly strong. He had been observed lurking about the rick-yard with a lantern, in which a light was burning, by a lad in the employ of Farmer Mayne, who had gone thither for hay to fodder his cattle about an hour before the fire broke out. At eleven o'clock the haystack was on fire, and at ten Robert Doyle had mentioned to James White, another boy in Farmer Mayne's service, that he had seen Mr. Philip Owen behind the great rick. Farmer Mayne himself had met him at half-past ten (as he was returning from B. market) in the lane leading from the rick-yard towards the village, and had observed him throw something he held in his hand into the ditch. Humphry Harris, a constable employed to seek for evidence, had found the next morning a lantern, answering to that described by Robert Doyle, in the part of the ditch indicated by Farmer Mayne, which Thomas Brown, the village shopkeeper, in whose house Owen slept, identified as having lent to his lodger in the early part of the evening. A silver pencil, given to Owen by the mother of one of his pupils, and bearing his full name on the seal at the end, was found close to where the fire was discovered; and, to crown all, the curate of the village, with whom

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the young man's talents and character had rendered him a deserved favourite, had unwillingly deposed that he had said "it might be in his power to take a great revenge on Farmer Mayne," or words to that effect; whilst a letter was produced from the accused to the farmer himself, intimating that one day he would be sorry for the oppression which he had exercised towards him and his. These two last facts were much relied upon as evincing malice, and implying a purpose of revenge from the accused towards the prosecutor; yet there were many who thought that the previous circumstances might well account for them without reference to the present occurrence, and that the conflagration of the ricks and farm-buildings might, under the spirit of the time, (for fires were raging every night in the surrounding villages,) be merely a remarkable coincidence. The young man himself simply denied the fact of setting fire to any part of the property or premises; inquired earnestly whether any lives had been lost, and still more earnestly after the health of Miss Lucy; and on finding that she had been confined to her bed by fever and delirium, occasioned, as was supposed, by the fright, ever since that unhappy occurrence, relapsed into a gloomy silence, and seemed to feel no concern or interest in the issue of the trial.

His friends, nevertheless, took kind and zealous measures for his defence,—engaged counsel, sifted testimony, and used every possible means, in the assurance of his innocence, to trace out the true incendiary. Nothing, however, could be discovered to weaken the strong chain of circumstantial evidence, or to impeach the credit of the witnesses, who, with the exception of the farmer himself, seemed all friendly to the accused, and most distrest at being obliged to bear testimony against him. On the eve of the trial, the most zealous of his friends could find no ground of hope, except in the chances of the day; Lucy, for whom alone the prisoner asked, being still confined by severe illness.

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The judges arrived—the whole terrible array of the special commission; the introductory ceremonies were gone through; the cause was called on, and the case proceeded with little or no deviation from the evidence already cited. When called upon for his defence, the prisoner again asked if Lucy Mayne were in court? and hearing that she was ill in her father's house, declined entering into any defence whatsoever. Witnesses to character, however, pressed forward—his old master, the attorney, the rector and curate of the parish, half the farmers of the village, every body, in short, who ever had an opportunity of knowing him, even his reputed rival, Mr. Hawkins, who, speaking, he said, on the authority of one who knew him well, professed himself confident that he could not be guilty of a bad action—a piece of testimony that seemed to strike and affect the prisoner more than any thing that had passed;—evidence to character crowded into court;—but all was of no avail against the strong chain of concurrent facts; and the judge was preparing to sum up, and the jury looking as if they had already condemned, when suddenly a piercing shriek was heard in the hall, and, pale, tottering, dishevelled, Lucy Mayne rushed into her father's arms, and cried out with a shrill despairing voice, that "she was the only guilty; that she had set fire to the rick; and that if they killed Philip Owen for her crime, they would be guilty of murder."

The general consternation may be imagined, especially that of the farmer, who had left his daughter almost insensible with illness, and still thought her light-headed. Medical assistance, however, was immediately summoned, and it then appeared that what she said was most true; that the lovers, for such they were, had been accustomed to deposit letters in one corner of that unlucky hay-rick; that having seen from her chamber window Philip Owen leaving the yard, she had flown with a taper in her hand to secure the expected letter, and, alarmed at her father's voice, had ran away so hastily, that she had, as she now remembered, left the lighted taper

amidst the hay; that then the fire came, and all was a blank to her, until, recovering that morning from the stupor succeeding to delirium, she had heard that Philip Owen was to be tried for his life from the effect of her carelessness, and had flown to save him she knew not how!

The sequel may be guessed: Philip was, of course, acquitted: every body, even the very judge, pleaded for the lovers; the young landlord and generous rival added his good word; and the schoolmaster of Farley and his pretty wife are at this moment one of the best and happiest couples in his Majesty's dominions.

CHRISTMAS AMUSEMENTS.

(No. I.)

Two or three years ago I went to pay a Christmas visit, about sixty miles off, to a family of old friends who had recently arrived from a long continental tour; and, after passing the season in London, had left it late in the summer for a fine old Gothic place, somewhat out of repair, which they rented from the guardians of the young nobleman, an infant in arms, to whom, on the death of a distant kinsman, the title and estates had devolved.

Haddonleigh Hall was, as I have said, a fine specimen of the mixed species of architecture, singularly picturesque and imposing, which prevailed in the time of Elizabeth and James the First. Vast as it was, it comprised only a part of the original design of the "high and mighty prince, our well-beloved cousin," one of the wealthy favourites of the time, for whose habitation it had been constructed; as might be seen by a large drawing, something between a map and an archi-

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tectural elevation, which hung over the chimney-piece in the great library, and was entitled "Haddonleigh Hall in its glory," although the erection had never proceeded farther than the present mansion house, a magnificent old seat, with its marble halls, its oaken staircases, its long galleries, its spacious chapel and armoury, its terraced gardens, its noble avenues, and the wild forest-like demesne, rather a chase than a park, by which the stately building was surrounded.

Out of repair it certainly was, and scantily furnished, according to modern notions, for the greater part of the moveables were coeval with the mansion; but the present occupant, a man of fine taste, and something of an antiquarian, liked it all the better on that account; and adding the sofas, screens, and ottomans, necessary to comfort, persisted in refusing to remove the carved, high-backed ebony chairs, and massive tables, which harmonized so well with the panelled walls and ceilings, and the rich Gothic windows. What had chiefly tempted him, however, to become its inhabitant, was certainly the contents of the old library, a collection of ancient and curious volumes, which, though somewhat tattered and fusty, contained, as he declared, more scarce tracts and rare editions than he had ever seen in a similar number of books. So enchanted was he with the discovery of this treasure, that he had summoned a brother bibliomaniac, also a man of large fortune, to partake of this great mental feast, and assist him in drawing up a catalogue raisonné of the collection. It was even rumoured that they were in treaty for the purchase, though this was too important a negociation to be talked of publicly.

Mr. Wilkins, such was the name of my worthy host, was a Welchman, of extensive property, and ancient family; and was not a little proud of his Cambrian descent, although too fond of literary and antiquarian pursuits to bury himself in the Principality. His lady had been a beauty, and was still a fine woman, and the very essence of good-nature. In other

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respects she was by no means remarkable: indeed, being of very sedentary habits, (she seldom moved from the corner of the sofa,) very gentle voice, and very few words, we were but too apt to forget that she was in company. The young people, five in number, whom I had not seen for many years, pleased and interested me exceedingly. Tom and Charles were two fine lads, from Oxford, thorough sportsmen; and Tom, in particular, very lively and intelligent. Of their sisters, Charlotte, the eldest, was a tall, fair young woman, beautiful, gentle, and simple, as her mother, whom she strongly resembled both in mind and person. Sophy was a pretty brunette, with something of her father's talent, directed, of course, to different pursuits; and Anne, the youngest, was a charming wild creature of sixteen or seventeen, not yet come out, though emancipated from the school-room and the governess, and left to run wild about the house, the general pet and plaything of the family.

Trees and children are, of all living things, those whose growth soonest makes one feel one's age: children especially. To sit under the shade of a pine of one's own planting, is nothing to being overtopped by a girl whom one used to dandle in one's arms, and fondle on one's knee. How short a time ago it seemed to me since Annie, Nannie, Nanette, (for by all those names the little lassie was wont and still continued to be called,) a damsel of some four years old, used to climb into my lap, and throw her arms round my neck, and beg for a story! And here she was a young woman, the gayest of the gay, the wildest of the wild! Now riding races with one brother, now skating with another; now clambering the walls to peep into an inaccessible tower; now trying to lift the lid of the unopenable chest, in which, according to the story always told of all old houses in all countries, a bride hid in sport on her wedding day, and was never found again until she had become a skeleton; now peering into a secret passage; now diving into a subterraneous vault; now attiring herself

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in a suit of armour; now chasing an undiscoverable and non-existent ghost: always the merriest, kindest, happiest of all human beings! Annie was far less beautiful than Charlotte, and less talented and accomplished than Sophia; but there is a certain word called charming, with which beauty has little to do, and talents and accomplishments still less: and charming Annie was to the full extent of that charming word.

I had expected that they would be full of balls and gaiety, and country parties, their neighbourhood being, though more stately and less populous than ours, well supplied with families equal in fortune and respectability to Mr. Wilkins himself; but I was agreeably disappointed by finding them quite free from country engagements; and except my fellow-guest, the bibliomaniac, the grave, abstracted Mr. Mortimer, a plain man of forty, with a splendid scholastic reputation, most literally a family party. It was clear that they visited none of their neighbours, and I could not help inquiring of Sophy "what could be the reason?"

"The reason," replied Miss Sophia, "is, that none of our neighbours have visited us. At first we were exceedingly puzzled at not being called upon, having taken all due means of announcing our arrival, by going out in the carriage almost every day, showing ourselves nicely dressed at church, and subscribing to the balls and the circulating library in the next town; whilst papa entered his name at a reading-room and billiard-club, and Tom and Charles became members of the hunt. We even went to milliners' shops where we wanted nothing, took Annie to a dancing-school, and talked to the governesses, and at the mammas, hugged an ugly little baby belonging to our next neighbour, sent for the apothecary, and invited the curate; so weary were we of our own company, so willing to be sociable. Still, however, nobody came; we were shunned like a pestilence; nobody curtsied to us at church; nobody spoke to us at the milliners'; nobody danced with us at the balls; the very nursery-maids seemed shy of

trusting us with their babies; and we relinquished our attempts at forming new acquaintance in despair. At last the apothecary let us into the secret. There were two causes for our being *taboo*, as they say in Otaheite. First of all, this old house of ours has a bad reputation. I don't mean because it is said to be haunted; for ghosts are generally considered as remarkably genteel and respectable persons, people of family and character; but because it has belonged, for the last fifty years, to a series of bachelor lords, whose female companions have been thoroughly unvisitable, and have really left a bad odour about the mansion. This was one reason; the other was in ourselves, or rather, in our name."

"Your name!"

"Yes, or rather in the last syllable; the unlucky termination in *kins*. The folks hereabouts are rather more tenacious about family and station than is common in England; and a neighbouring place, Kinlay Park, having been let in succession to a Mr. Tomkins, who turned out to be a hosier; a Mr. Simkins, from Mark Lane; and a Mr. Hoskins, from Billingsgate, they have foresworn all intercourse with so plebeian a syllable, even although the three first letters be of some gentility. They will find us out in time," pursued Sophy, with great good-humour; "and then how they will stare at papa's long pedigree. In the mean while, we do very well as we are."

And very well we did; especially in the mornings when reading, writing, drawing, working, driving, riding, and walking, besides all sorts of out-of-door sports for the young men, and battledore and shuttlecock for Annie, passed away the day-light hours rapidly and merrily; but in the evening I sometimes thought the young people would have been glad of a little variety. At this time Mr. Wilkins and Mr. Mortimer usually joined us, the former going to sleep, and the latter sitting, for the most part, in complacent silence; Mrs. Wilkins and her lap-dog sat in equal silence on the sofa, and the

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young folks, too brother and sisterish for dancing, and too old for forfeits or blindman's buff, tried music, tried billiards, tried chess; and after being thoroughly weary of them all, threatened to get up some tableaux, only tableaux wanted spectators; and talked of acting a play, which, besides the usual difficulties as to cast, involved, even more than the tableaux, the want of an audience. At length some one reverted to the French charades, which they used to perform abroad, and the suggestion was hailed with universal approbation, the scene chosen, and an early evening fixed for the experiment; the result of which shall, in due time, be communicated to the courteous reader.

NOTE.—My description of Haddonleigh Hall bears so strong a resemblance to Bramshill, the beautiful residence of Sir John Cope, that it is necessary to inform the courteous reader, that they are in reality two places, and that the proprietors and inhabitants of the one are entirely unconnected with the proprietor, who is also the inhabitant of the other. Perhaps, as I have mentioned Bramshill, I may be permitted to transcribe part of a hasty epistle, written by me two or three years since, to a dear young friend, (a simpleton only in keeping my letters,) and which contains an account of a visit of mine to that magnificent place, celebrated not only for its own antiquity and grandeur, but for its being the residence of a fox-hunter, whose hounds are noted for their excellence and beauty, and the scene of many famous cricket-matches, a part of the park being devoted to that noble sport, of which Sir John, a country gentleman of the old school, full of heartiness and hospitality, is a most determined patron.

My correspondent being in London, my epistle began, like most feminine letters to the great city, with a farrago of commissions the most troublesome, and chit-chat the most trifling, and messages the most confused, mixed with questions * of all

* I am rather renowned for making an over-free use of the note of

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sorts, about theatres, and actors, and singers, and authors, and pictures, and books, and then went on as follows, for I shall not change one word:

"Now, my dearest, I am going to tell you of an exploit of mine, which I longed for you extremely to share. Last Saturday I dined at the house of a friend in the neighbourhood, and was reproached by another friend, a spirited young fox-hunter, with never having gone to see the hounds throw off. I said that I should greatly enjoy the sight, and would certainly go some day or other; the lady of the house replied, that she would drive me; the conversation then turned to other subjects, and I never expected to hear more of the scheme.

"The next day, however, Sir John calling on my fair friend, the plan was mentioned and settled, and the young gentleman who had originally suggested the expedition, rode over to let me know that at half-past nine the next day Mrs. S. would call for me.

"At half-past nine, accordingly, she arrived, in a small limber pony-carriage, drawn by a high-blooded little Arabian, on whom she herself (the daughter and sister of a whole race of fox-hunters) had been accustomed to hunt in Wiltshire, and attended by her husband's hunting-groom, excellently mounted. The weather was all that could be desired; one of those vapoury, misty autumnal mornings, that break into so bright a noon; I was delighted with the project, and with my charming companion, a most lovely and intelligent woman; she on her part was pleased to be the cause of so much pleasure, and off we set in the highest possible spirits.

"It was the first day of the season; the *fixture*, (are you sportswoman enough, Emily, to understand that technical phrase?) the fixture was in Bramshill Park, and it was ex-

interrogation. One of my correspondents, a gentleman by the way, is saucy enough to say, that I once sent him fifteen questions in five lines To think of his counting them!

pected to be the most numerous field of many years, Mr. Warde—pshaw! he is too eminent a man to be mistered! John Warde, the celebrated fox-hunter, the very Nestor of the chase, who, after keeping fox-hounds for fifty-seven years, has, just at seventy-nine, found himself beginning to grow old, and given up his pack, being on a visit at the house, and all the hunt likely to assemble to see this most agreeable person. Very well worth seeing he is, I assure you, certainly one of the pleasantest men that it has ever been my fortune to foregather with, full of anecdote, and as beautiful as my own father, in a similar style, just such a specimen of bright, vigorous, blooming, healthful, cheerful old age.

"Well, off we set; got to Bramshill just as breakfast was over; saw the hounds brought out in front of the house to be admired; drove to covert; saw the finding of the fox; heard the first grand burst at his going off; followed him to another covert; and the scent being bad, and the field so numerous, that he was constantly headed back, both he, who finally ran to earth, and another fox found subsequently, kept dodging about from thicket to thicket, in that magnificent demesne (the very perfection of park scenery, hill and dale, and wood and water); and for above four hours we, with our spirited little steed, kept up with the chase, driving over road and no road, across drains, and through gaps; often run away with, sometimes almost tossed out, but with a degree of delight and enjoyment, such as I never felt before, and never, I verily believe, shall feel again.

"The field (above a hundred horsemen, most of them known to my fair companion) were much pleased with our sportsmanship, which in me (much as I have always as an author cherished country sports) was in my own person unexpected. They showed us the kindest attention, brought me the brush, which I have hung up in my green-house; and when, at three o'clock, we and Mr. Warde, and two or three others, went in to luncheon, whilst the hounds proceeded to

Eversley, I really do not think that there was a gentleman present who was not good-naturedly gratified by our gratification.

"Unless you have seen a pack of hounds throw off, you can hardly imagine the animation or the beauty of the scene. The horses *are* most beautiful, and the dogs, although not pretty separately, are so when collected, and in their own proper scenery, which is exactly the case with the scarlet coats of the fox-hunters. I had seen nothing of the park before beyond the cricket-ground, and never could have had such a guide to its inmost recesses, the very heart of its sylvan solitudes, as the fox. The house, a superb Gothic structure, built by the last Lord Zouch, and kept in proud repair by the present hospitable possessor, is placed on so commanding an eminence, that it seemed meeting us in every direction, and harmonized completely with the old English feeling of the park and the sport. You must see Bramshill. It is like nothing hereabouts, but reminds me of the grand old mansions in the north of England. Prince Henry (the eldest son of James the First) is said to have resided here; whilst Inigo Jones contributed to adorn its terraces, and his great enemy, Ben Jonson, projected masques in its courts. It was in this park also that Archbishop Abbot accidentally shot a keeper, who bled to death within the hour.

"In short, the place is full of histories. It has a haunted room; a chapel shut up, and full of armour; a chest, where, as they say, a bride hid on her wedding-day, and the spring-lock closing, was lost, and perished, and never found until years and years had passed; (this story, by the way, is common to old buildings; it used to be told of the great house at Malsanger;) it swarms with family-pictures, has a hall with the dais, much fine tapestry, and is wanting in no point of antique dignity; the library is full of old books, the furniture as true to the ancient fashion as is compatible with modern

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notions of comfort; and I cannot conceive a more perfect specimen of a great nobleman's residence in the seventeenth century than the splendid mansion of Bramshill. You must come back to us, Emily, if only to see the hounds throw off in the Park."

(No. II.)

On the next evening, as pre-arranged, we met in the great Oriel apartment to enjoy our promised charades. There had been a talk of a dressed charade—a scene or two in full costume; and the recess which gave its name to the chamber, and which contained a beautiful Gothic window over the porch, was well adapted for the purpose. It requires, however, some courage to disrobe unnecessarily in a frosty night in January; and there being no young lady present except their sisters, Charles and Tom did not find their vanity sufficiently interested to supply the adequate motive for such an exertion. Besides which, their first charade, as they affirmed, required no change of apparel, so that the recess, with an Indian screen before it, was devoted to the purpose of a green-room, and we, the audience, assembled on one side of the fire-place, whilst the actors, after arranging their *properties* (two chairs and an easel) on the stage, and announcing what the scene was intended to represent, proceeded in their performance, with as little interruption as could well be expected; with none, indeed, (for applause must not be called interruption,) except once when Annie, in her zeal to help away with the easel, knocked down the screen, waking her father from a comfortable nap by the clatter, and oversetting her brother Charles, the Talbot of the charade. With this slight exception all went well.

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CHARADE THE FIRST.*

Scene the First. Beauchamp's *House.*

Beauchamp *at the Easel.* *Enter* Talbot.

Talbot. What, Beauchamp! at the easel this morning? This is a fresh accès. I thought you had forsworn painting ever since we saw the masterpieces of art at Florence and the Vatican.

Beauchamp. Ha, Talbot! Pray take a chair. Forsworn Art? Yes, as a pursuit, as an object of ambition and vanity, certainly yes. But as a record of sentiment, as certainly no. It is one thing to compete with the Titians and Raphaels in Venuses and Madonnas, and another to endeavour to transfer to canvass, however faintly, the real charms of a living beauty.

Tal. "An affair of sentiment!" Ho! ho! "A living beauty!" There is a lady in the case, then. Well! every man to his taste. I had rather follow the hounds on my good steed Bayard, over the Leicestershire country, and break my neck, if so it chance, in a fox-chase, than break my heart by pursuing the fairest nymph that ever wore petticoats. But every man to his taste. Do I know the lady?

Beau. I think not.

Tal. And may one inquire her name?

Beau. It is a name that suits her well; the sweetest name ever breathed by poet or lover—Julia.

Tal. Julia! Pooh! Her family name?

* Perhaps it may not be wholly unnecessary to mention, that the fashionable amusement of acted charades resembles, but with greater intricacy, the well-known French diversion of proverbs, of which last, by the way, a collection was published by no less a personage than Catherine of Russia. The whole little drama is literally a riddle of that species called a charade; consisting, in the present instance, of a word of two syllables, the *first* of which is to be gathered from the opening scene; the *second* from the next; and the *third* or *whole* from the concluding one.

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Beau. Vernon; Miss Julia Vernon.

Tal. Vernon. Oh! a daughter of the General's. One of the four Miss Vernons whom one hears of every where with their tall mamma?

Beau. The loveliest of that lovely family. Oh, my dear Talbot! neither painting nor poetry can give the faintest image of her charms—" So soft, so sweet, so delicate she came, youth's opening rose——"

Tal. Spare me the poetry, I beseech you. I shall see the goddess herself to-night at her aunt Lady Dashleigh's, and then you may introduce me.

Beau. I shan't be able to go to Lady Dashleigh's—An odious man-dinner at the Clarendon; and then the House—There'll be no escaping before the division. But I'll get Harry Lescombe to introduce you; and you must come to-morrow morning and tell me what you think of her. Take care of your heart.

Tal. Yes, I'll come. I'll be sure to come. I am sorry for this love affair, very sorry; for I thought we should have got you down amongst us at Melton Mowbray next season. You were talking of forming a stud; and there are some capital hunters on sale at Tattersall's. But when once a man sets his heart on marrying—Let us look at her portrait, however—I take for granted that it is her portrait.

Beau. A faint copy of the charms of the original. There! [*Displaying the picture.*]

Tal. Really I did not think you had been so good an artist. A very pretty bit of colour, indeed; very delicately hit off. Rather too much of the lily, though, to suit my taste. Is Miss Julia really so pale?

Beau. She has just as much colour as any woman ought to have—the maiden-rose tint. This cheek would bear a thought more—I can add it in a moment.

Tal. Yes; we all know that a little rouge is easily put on a lady's face.

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Beau. *(seating himself at the easel.)* Hold thy irreverent tongue, and reach me yonder brush—not that—the farther one. Thank you. Now, you shall see in a moment—*(painting)* Heavens! What have I done! The whole picture is ruin'd—spoilt for ever! This is the brush with which I was adding the deepest shades to her lovely dark hair, the opaque brush—only see—ruined for ever! Don't say a word, my dear fellow. It's entirely my fault! Irredeemably spoilt—A week's work—such a likeness—and ruined for ever! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE *the* SECOND.—*The same Apartment.*

Enter TALBOT *to* BEAUCHAMP.

Beau. How late you are! I was on the point of calling to see what detained you.

Tal. A thousand pardons! I was kept at home by the sudden lameness of Bayard—you know Bayard—finest hunter in England—cost me a cool three hundred last season—can't put his off fore-foot to the ground.

Beau. Very sorry. Were you at Lady Dashleigh's last night?

Tal. Yes. Sent for Colman. Colman thinks it's only a prick—touched in the shoeing—and advises one of his bar shoes; but my groom——

Beau. Did you see Julia?

Tal. Yes. My groom says——

Beau. Yes. Were you introduced to her?

Tal. Yes. My groom thinks, and he knows more of Bayard's action than Colman——

Beau. Hang Colman! Did you dance with Julia?

Tal. No. My groom says that Bayard——

Beau. Hang Bayard!

Tal. Hang Bayard! Really, Mr. Beauchamp——

Beau. My dear friend, I do not mean the slightest offence to your horse—finest animal in England! But do talk to me

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of Julia! Did you converse with her? Did you see her dance? Did you hear her sing?

Tal. Ye—es.

Beau. Well! and were you not charmed, enchanted? Do you not think her exquisitely beautiful? Her figure so light and graceful? Her countenance so full of sensibility and sweetness? Is not she an angel?

Ital. A fineish girl.

Beau. And then, her singing, her dancing, her conversation!

Tal. Pretty fair.

Beau. Talbot, do you know of whom you are speaking? Pretty fair!

Tal. Why, to confess the truth, my dear Beauchamp, this Julia of yours is not altogether one of my beauties. She is too pale, too tall, too thin, too lanky, shows too much bone. I like a little flesh and blood.

Beau. Gracious heaven, what coarseness of idea!

Tal. And, moreover, I don't like the breed. I have a regard for you, Beauchamp; and I can't help giving you warning, that Mrs. Vernon is the most determined husband-hunting mamma in London; we all know that the General is as poor as Job, and as proud as Lucifer; and I have it from the best authority, that Miss Julia herself is as arrant a flirt——

Beau. Be silent, Mr. Talbot; be silent, sir. It was but yesterday that you were the cause of my defacing an imperfect copy of her divine features. To-day you would sully her spotless reputation. Go back to your groom and Bayard; they are your fit companions. Leave me, sir.

Tal. I take no notice of what you say, my good friend; because you are in a passion, and a lover has a madman's privilege: but I have an old regard for you, and I advise you not to be too hasty in your proceedings.

Beau. Out of my house, sir! Get out instantly.

Tal. Take time to consider. Look before you leap.

Beau. Off with you, sir!—I have a good mind to kick him

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down stairs. In a passion, indeed! Impertinent puppy! I never was cooler in my life. I'll go to the General, and propose for her this moment!—Insufferable coxcomb! [*Exit.*]

SCENE THE THIRD.—*Regent Street.*

BEAUCHAMP *and* TALBOT, *meeting.*

Beau. Ha! Talbot, my dear fellow! I am delighted to see you. I thought you had been hunting in Leicestershire.

Tal. Just ran up for a day or two, whilst the frost holds; and very lucky to meet with you, and wish you joy in person. You got my letter?

Beau. Yes. Have you had good runs this season?

Tal. Capital. I saw the happy event in the papers, and took my chance of writing to your house in town, to congratulate, and apologize, and so forth.

Beau. No need of apologies on your part, God knows! You are a good fellow, Talbot—a real friend. It is I that ought to apologize. Ah! if I had but taken your advice. But a man must follow his destiny.

Tal. I hope the fair lady is well?

Beau. We won't talk of her, Talbot. How is Bayard, that noble steed? Does he sustain his reputation?

Tal. I refused four hundred pounds for him last week. Where have you been since August? Did you go a tour?

Beau. Yes—to the Lakes.

Tal. A pleasant excursion?

Beau. All the pleasure of travelling, my dear friend, depends on one's company—I found it a confounded bore. By the way, I've a great mind to run down to Melton with you for a week or two. Could you put me in the way of buying some good horses? I shall certainly take to fox-hunting again.

Tal. I shall be delighted, of course; but what will Mrs. Beauchamp say?

Beau. Say! What right has she to say any thing? Don't

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talk of Mrs. Beauchamp—there's a dear fellow. Do you think you can help me to the hunters? Eh!

Tal. Why, I know that Dick Mathews had some to dispose of yesterday. I'll go and see about them.

Beau. I shall be eternally obliged to you. And hark ye, Talbot—dine with me at seven, and we'll settle about the jaunt into Leicestershire. I have some thoughts of taking a box there—a hunting box—just to run down to. Dine with me at seven.

Tal. In Harley Street?

Beau. Oh no, no! at the old place, the Clarendon—a bachelor's dinner at the Clarendon, my boy!—a snug bachelor's dinner!—*Au revoir!*

The Charade was received, as usual, with some laughter, a little praise, and much criticism. Every female present exclaimed against its deplorable want of gallantry, (need I say that the word is marriage?) and prophesied old-bachelorship, and all its evils, to the contrivers and performers. Some fault was found, too, with the bad spelling of the divided syllables; but this the actors, who had pleaded guilty to the first charge, defended stoutly, reminding their accuser, Miss Sophia, that one of her own most successful French Charades, at Florence, had been Cléopatre, of which the first syllable was represented by the key scene from Blue Beard, the second by the water spirits from Undine, the third by some pastoral of Gesner's, and the fourth by the well-known catastrophe of the asp, personated on that occasion by a Bologna sausage, the cold touch of which had, as one of them asserted, frightened Sophy, who took it for a real serpent, out of her wits. "Clef and eau for Cléo," pursued Tom, "and she to talk of false spelling!" And thereupon Tom, in a dudgeon, marched to the fire, and sat down. But as the whole party, his fair critic included, pressed for another, his brother and he again retired behind the screen; and, after a little whispering consultation,

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during which Annie had been despatched for the weighty Memoirs of Pepys and Evelyn, which we had been looking over in the morning, and a little squabble for the choice of parts, both of them (dramatically right, though morally wrong) preferring the amusing coxcomb of the Admiralty, he who has left so individual and identified a portrait of himself and his foibles, to the sage philosopher of Say Court; after a little dispûte as to parts, as the fashion is amongst great actors, they announced the scene and the date, and began Charade the Second.

CHARADE THE SECOND.

Scene the First.—*St. James's Park*—1667.

Mr. Evelyn *and* Mr. Pepys *meeting.*

Mr. Evelyn. My worthy Mr. Pepys, how are you this morning?

Mr. Pepys. The better, assuredly, for the honour of meeting my good Mr. Evelyn. Will you take a turn in the walk? I am waiting the duke's leisure, who is, as you perceive, engaged with the king and Sir John Minnes.

Mr. Evel. Is there any thing new in town? I am but just landed at Whitehall, having come by water from my retirement of Say Court, to dine at his new house with my Lord of Clarendon; and I address myself to Mr. Pepys for news, as the most absolute courtier both in statecraft and poesy.

Mr. Pepys. Oh, my good sir!—for affairs of policy, I must refer you to my Lord of Clarendon. They are too weighty for so slight a person as myself, Mr. Evelyn; but men may judge by straws which way the wind sets; and you may see my Lady Castlemaine yonder neglected and in the dumps.—That star is on the wane;—but these matters are above my sphere. For the Muses, we had last night at the Duke's

House a new play called the Tempest, one of Shakspeare's old drolleries revised and perfected by Dryden, wherein pretty Mrs. Nelly did really excel herself. I know of nothing else new, except a lampoon which the wits give to the Duke of Buckingham, and a new song by my Lord of Dorset. How goes on the New Society, Mr. Evelyn? And, above all, your own great work on Forest-trees?

Mr. Evel. Slowly, my good Mr. Pepys—slowly. I shall be glad to show it to you some day at Say Court, together with some other small pieces, if you can partake of my poor dinner at the old-fashioned time of twelve at noon. I hate these new-fangled hours, Mr. Pepys;—these one o'clock dinners. Our fathers, my good sir, dined at eleven. But we are a degenerate race. These are signs of the times—awful signs!

Mr. Pepys. They are so, indeed, Mr. Evelyn. But, my good sir, I most respectfully take my leave. The Duke is beckoning to me.—I wish you a good day.

Mr. Evel. A good day to you, Mr. Pepys! Remember that we shall expect you at Say Court with your first leisure, and not later than noon. A good day to you, sir!

[*Exeunt severally, bowing.*]

SCENE THE SECOND.—*Hyde Park*—1830.

LORD JOHN LUTTRIDGE *and* MR. ADEANE *meeting.*

A Crowd on the Serpentine.

Lord John. Ah! my dear Adeane! How long from Vienna? Are you come to show off your Austrian Spread Eagles on the Serpentine?

Mr. Adeane. Why, really, my dear lord, after the Danube, one can't think of figuring on these English puddles. Besides, the crowd! And I have left my Hamburgh skaits to follow with my trunks from Dover. Is there any news in this smoky, frosty, dirty London?

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L. John. Why, not much, I believe. Bankruptcies in plenty—some talk of a general election, an early opera season, and a vast number of applications to subscribe to Almack's. But I am only just arrived myself—merely passing through from Holkham to Chatsworth.

Mr. Ad. Town seems quite empty.

L. John. Why, so I hear. And yet there can hardly be less than a hundred thousand persons in the Park at this moment. Really that officer skaits well.

Mr. Ad. But when one says town is empty, one means that there is nobody whom one knows—nobody fit to be known.

L. John. Now it seems to me that there are a great many people whom one should like to know—I have not seen so many pretty women together these dozen years.

Mr. Ad. Does your Lordship think so?

L. John. Why, don't you?

Mr. Ad. Really no. English noses get so red in a frost?

L. John. *(Aside.)* English noses! The Lord have mercy on these travelled gentlemen!

Mr. Ad. And just look at that lubber. "English awkwardness on two legs!"

L. John. Take care of your own legs, Adeane. You are getting on a slide. This place is as slippery as glass—Take care! He'll certainly tumble—there he goes.—*(Mr. Adeane falls; Lord John helps him up.)*—I hope you are not seriously hurt. No bones broke. Can you walk?

Mr. Ad. Yes, yes! This sort of accident could never have happened to me abroad; but the moment a man sets foot on this wretched island—

L. John. Why, our English elements are no respecters of persons; that must be confessed.

Mr. Ad. Does not your Lordship hear a cracking? We shall certainly be drowned.

L. John There is not the slightest danger, except of your

getting another tumble. That fall of yours has made you nervous. Keep hold of my arm, my good fellow, and I'll pilot you to Terra Firma; and then we'll go to Brookes's to while away two or three hours before dinner. The sun is but just set.—*(Aside.)* He'll certainly get another tumble, this travelled gentleman, with his "English awkwardness on two left legs." Keep hold of me, Adeane, till we are clear of the Serpentine. Stick to me. I'll take care of you.—*(Aside.)* He'll never get off without another tumble. [*Exeunt.*]

Scene the Third.—*A Study.*

Mr. Frampton alone, reading a Newspaper.

Frampton (reading). "We are sorry to be compelled to state amongst the list of failures the firm of Fitzarthur, Dawson, and Co. The elegant taste and amiable qualities of the senior partner of this old-established house will render him an object of universal sympathy."—Sympathy! These newspaper writers are pretty fellows at a word! Sympathy, forsooth, universal sympathy! And Fitzarthur a bankrupt! the handsome, the graceful, the witty Henry Fitzarthur, the life of every circle, the chosen of Agnes Merivale, a bankrupt! an object of universal sympathy! Go to, Mr. Printer—I must feast my eyes once more on the paragraph. Ay, here he is too in the Gazette. There is no mistake in the business. Fitzarthur a bankrupt!

Enter Servant.

Did not I give orders not to be disturbed?

Ser. A gentleman, sir, requests a moment's audience.

Fram. I am engaged.

Ser. He desired me to give this card.

Fram. (after reading the card). Show him up. [*Exit Servant.*] Fitzarthur himself! My old acquaintance Henry Fitzarthur—the bankrupt! the object, as the Morning Post

assures us, of universal sympathy. It were sin and shame not to despatch him quickly.

Enter FITZARTHUR.

Now, sir!

Fitz. I have to apologize for an intrusion, which is, I fear, equally unwelcome and unexpected.

Fram. Waive apologies, sir; I hate them.

Fitz. So long a time has elapsed since we met, that my person is, perhaps, scarcely remembered by Mr. Frampton.

Fram. If I had forgotten you, sir, this paper would have recalled you to my memory.

Fitz. The unfortunate speculations of my partner—

Fram. You all, no doubt, can tell your own story. He perhaps might talk of his partner's supineness. But that can hardly be your business with me.

Fitz. No, sir; I waited on you to request a favour, on which my welfare, and that of my wife and children, utterly depend.

Fram. And you speak of your wife to me! Do you happen to remember, sir, the transaction on which we last met, the transaction on which we parted?

Fitz. I trusted, Frampton, that you had forgotten it.

Fram. Forgotten! I loved Agnes Merivale; I told you of my love; I made you known to her; and you, my friend, (for such you dared to call yourself,) became my rival, my successful rival. Treachery such as that cannot be forgotten.

Fitz. At least I trusted that an interval of ten years had swept from your mind all bitterness of recollection.

Fram. You thought me then a fool. Where is she now?

Fitz. In London.

Fram. At your house in Baker Street?

Fitz. That house, with all that it contained, is given up to the creditors. Agnes is in humble lodgings, suited to our fortunes.

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Fram. You have also a house in the New Forest?

Fitz. I had.

Fram. A beautiful place, fitted up with the taste for which Agnes was famous—a fine library; a superb conservatory; prints and statues—you were a collector; pictures old and new—you ranked high amongst the patrons.

Fitz. I *had* these things. They are mine no longer.

Fram. Holly-grove—that I think was the name of your villa; a lovely spot: I passed it last summer. Agnes had a keen relish for the beauties of nature; she must have been fond of Holly-grove?

Fitz. Her very heart was in it—it was her home, the home of her children—Alas! they may soon have none!

Fram. Ay, this poor house of mine might have been her home, but it lacks these adornments. Here are no medals, no pictures, no coins, no busts! 'Tis an old spacious mansion-house, to be sure, and stands amidst a fair number of its own acres, but it is out of date, like its master. Frampton Hall could no more compete with Holly-grove, than plain George Frampton with Henry Fitzarthur. We should have known our station.

Fitz. Be merciful, Frampton! Be merciful!

Fram. Yes! Holly-grove was a beautiful place. I saw Agnes on the lawn one evening last summer, in the midst of her children. There was a chubby infant, and two or three delicate girls, and a couple of sturdy boys, and the mother, handsomer than ever, in her stately and regal beauty, drest and appointed like a queen, with her retinue of nursery attendants, flowers under her feet, flowering shrubs over her head, the rarest exotics perfuming the air!—Agnes must have been happy at Holly-grove.

Fitz. Alas! alas! too happy!

Fram. The eldest child was a fine boy. Was he at school?

Fitz. At Eton.

Fram. Already! And of promise?

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Fitz. Of the highest.

Fram. Intended for any profession?

Fitz. For the bar.

Fram. Indeed! Parents are apt to frame such visions. The bar!—Well, sir, what is your pleasure with me?

Fitz. This letter—if you would condescend——

Fram. The letter is not addressed to me.

Fitz. No, it is to your friend Lord B. A small place, for which I am every way suited, is now vacant in his department; and that letter, if presented by you, and backed by your intercession, would insure it to me. I throw myself on your generosity! I implore your mercy! For the sake of the woman whom you once loved——

Fram. Hold, sir!

Fitz. For the sake of her poor children——

Fram. Those children, sir, are also yours. Have you no other channel through which to send this letter?

Fitz. None whatsoever.

Fram. No other resource? No other hope?

Fitz. None upon earth. It is the only chance that remains, to preserve us from starvation.

Fram. *(tearing the letter)*. Then starve!

Again the Charade was over, and some applause was given to the climax of "malice" in the last scene. "False spelling though again, Tom," cried Sophia;—"and what is worse, want of unity in the subject, three detached scenes instead of one story." "Remember Cléopatre, Sophy," rejoined Tom; "what do you say to the unity there? Blue Beard, Undine, Gesner, and Shakspeare, or Dryden,—which play did you take the asp scene from? Eh! however, four distinct authors to one Charade." "Never mind Sophy's criticisms," said Annie, "she's so clever, you know, and clever people will find faults where we simpletons see none; only give us another—pray do; and, dear Tom, let it be a little harder to find out. I like to be puzzled." "Well, Annie," replied Tom, "if Sophy

will help, I'll try what I can do to perplex you; and it shall be one unbroken story, and a love story, such as young ladies like, and of the date of the commonwealth, which will please my father, if he should happen to be awake." And Sophia assenting, and Charles fetching, at Tom's instigation, a very ancient weapon of the gun or musquet genus from the armoury, (which had nearly sent me off, but for Tom's solemn promise not to fire,) they again retreated behind the screen, and emerged in the guise of a pair of lovers of the seventeenth century.

CHARADE THE THIRD.

SCENE I.—*An old-fashioned Garden, with Terraces, Fountains, Yew-hedges, &c.—A large Mansion in the background.—Time, eight in the evening. A.D.* 1657.

MABEL GOODWIN—*(alone)*.

Mabel. So! Master Alfred Montresor! He promised to meet me here by eight, and the great clock in the hall wanted but five minutes full half-an-hour agone. It must be half-an-hour. I have been pacing up and down this walk, from the yew-hedge to the fountain, twenty times at least, besides going twice to the little door in the garden-wall, to be sure that it was unbolted. It can't be a minute less than half-an-hour. He had as well stay now in his hiding-place in the village, for I'll never speak to him again. Never! And yet, poor fellow—No! I'll never speak to him again!

Enter ALFRED MONTRESOR.

So, Master Alfred!

Alfred. So, my pretty Mistress Mabel! Why turn away so angrily? What fault have I committed, I pray thee?

Mab. Fault? None!

Alf. Nay, nay, my little Venus of the Puritans, my princess of all Precisians, if thou be offended, tell me so.

Mab. Offended, forsooth! People are never offended with people they don't care about. Offended, quotha!

Alf. And is it because people don't care for people, that they bridle, and flounce, and toss, and put their pretty selves into such pretty tantrums—eh, Mistress Mabel? I am after time, sweet—but——

Mab. After time! I have been here this half-hour!—and my father fast asleep in the hall! After time!—If thou hadst cared for me——But men are all alike. There hath not been a true lover in the world since Amadis his day, the mad Paladin that my old nurse was used to talk of—and that was but a false legend. After time!—Why, if thou hadst cared for me only as much as I care for this sprig of lavender, thou would'st have been waiting for me before the chimes had rung seven. Just think of the time thou hast lost.—Now thou may'st go thy ways.—Leave me, sir!

Alf. Nay, mine own sweet love, do not offer to snatch thy hand away. I cannot part with thee, Mabel, though thou should'st flutter like a new-caught dove. I must speak with thee. I have that to say which *must* be heard.

Mab. Well?

Alf. I have been dogged all day by a canting Puritan, a follower, as I take it, of thy godly father.

Mab. Jeer not my father, Alfred, although he be a roundhead and thou a cavalier. He is a brave man and a good.

Alf. He is *thy* father, and, therefore, sacred to me.—Where didst thou say he is now?

Mab. I left him in the hall, just settling quietly to an after-supper nap.—Why dost thou ask?

Alf. I have been watched all day by one whom I suspect to be a spy; and I fear me, that in spite of my disguise, my false name, and my humble lodging, I am discovered.

Mab. Discovered in thy visits here? Discovered as my —— friend?

Alf. No, no, I trust not so. Therefore I delayed to come

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to thee till I could shake off my unwelcome follower. Not discovered as thy lover, thy *friend*, if such name better please thee—but as the cavalier and malignant (for so their phrase runs) Alfred Montresor.

Mab. But granting that were true, what harm hast thou committed? What hast thou to fear?

Alf. Small harm, dear Mabel; and yet in these bad days small harm may cause great fear. I have borne arms for the King; I have never acknowledged the Protector; I am known as the friend of Ormond, perhaps suspected as his agent; and, moreover, I am the rightful owner of this same estate and mansion of Montresor Hall, its parks, manors, and dependencies, bestowed by the sequestrators on thy father, Colonel Goodwin. Seest thou no fear there, fair Mabel?

Mab. Alas! alas!

Alf. Then my deceased father, stout old Sir Robert, was meddled in every plot and rising in the country, from the first year of the Rebellion to this, as I well trust, the last of the usurpation, so that the very name sounds like a fire-brand. 'Twould be held a fair service to the state, Mabel, to shoot thy poor friend; and yet I promise thee, albeit a loyal subject to King Charles, I am hardly fool enough to wage war in my own single person against Oliver, whom a mightier conqueror than himself will speedily overthrow.

Mab. A mightier conqueror!

Alf. Even the great tyrant Death—he who levels the mighty and the low—Alfred Montresor and Oliver Cromwell!

Mab. Death! Art thou then in such peril? And dost thou loiter here? I beseech thee away! away this moment! What detains thee?

Alf. That which brought me—thyself. Being in England, I came hither, more weeks ago than I care to think of, to look on my old birth-place, my old home. I saw thee, Mabel, and ever since I have felt that these halls are a thousandfold more

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precious to me as thy home, as thy inheritance, than ever they could have been as mine. I love thee, Mabel.

Mab. Oh go! go! go! To talk of love whilst thou art in such danger!

Alf. I love thee, mine own Mabel.

Mab. Go!

Alf. Wilt thou go with me? I am not rich—I have no fair mansion to take thee to; but a soldier's sword and a soldier's arm, and a true heart, Mabel! Wilt thou go with me, sweet one? I'll bring horses to the little garden door. The moon will be up at twelve—Speak, dearest? And yet this trembling hand speaks for thee. Wilt thou go with me and be my wedded wife?

Mab. I will. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE THE SECOND.—*The same Garden. A high Wall on one Side, with a small strong Door in it. The House in the back-ground.*

Enter ALFRED, *from the side-door.*

Alf. Mabel! Not yet arrived! Surely she cannot have changed her purpose? No, no! It were treason against true love but to suspect her of wavering—she lingers from maiden modesty, from maiden fear, from natural affection, from all that man worships in woman. But if she knew the cause I have to dread every delay!

Enter MABEL, *from the house.*

Mabel? Sweetest, how breathless thou art! Thou canst hardly stand! Rest thee on this seat a moment, my Mabel! And yet delay—Hath ought befallen to affright thee? Sit here, dearest! What hath startled thee?

Mab. I know not. And yet—

Alf. How thou tremblest still! And what—?

Mab. As I passed the gallery—Only feel how my heart flutters, Alfred!

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Alf. Blessings on that dear heart! Calm thee, sweetest.—What of the gallery?

Mab. As I passed, methought I heard voices.

Alf. Indeed! And I, too, have missed the detected spy who hath been all day dogging my steps. Can he—but no! All is quiet in the house. Look, Mabel! All dark and silent. No light save the moonbeams dancing on the window panes with a cold pale brightness. No sound save the song of the nightingale—dost thou not hear it? It seems to come from the tall shrubby sweet-brier, which sends its fragrant breath in at yonder casement.

Mab. That is my father's chamber—my dear, dear father! Oh, when he shall wake and find his Mabel gone, little will the breath of the sweet-brier, or the song of the nightingale, comfort him then! My dear, dear father! He kissed me after prayers to-night, and laid his hand on my head and blessed me. He will never bless his poor child again.

Alf. Come, sweetest! The horses wait; the hours wear on; morning will soon be here.

Mab. Oh, what a morning to my poor, poor father! his Mabel, his only child, his beloved, his trusted! Oh, Alfred, my father! my father!

Alf. Maiden, if thou lovest thy father better than me, remain with him. It is not yet too late. I love thee, Mabel, as well as man may love on this side of idolatry; too well to steal thee away against thy will; too well to take thy hand without thy heart. The choice is still open to thee. Return to thy father's house, or wend with me. Weep not thus, dear one; but decide, and quickly.

Mab. Nay, I will go with thee, Alfred. Forgive these tears! I'll go with thee to the end of the world.

Alf. Now, then. What noise is that?

Mab. Surely, surely, the turning of a key.

Alf. Ay, the door is fastened; the horses are led off. We are discovered.

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Mab. Is there no other way of escape?

Alf. None. The garden is walled round. Look at these walls, Mabel; a squirrel could scarcely climb them. Through the house is the only chance; and that—

Mab. Try the door again: I do beseech thee try. Push against it—I never knew it fastened other than by this iron bolt. Push manfully.

Alf. It is all in vain; thou thyself heard'st the key turn; and see how it resists my utmost strength. The door is surely fast. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE THE THIRD.—*The same Part of the Garden with that represented in the first Scene.*

Enter ALFRED *and* MABEL *from the side.*

Mab. See! The household is alarmed! Look at the lights! Venture not so near, dear Alfred! Conceal thee in the arbour till all is quiet. I will go meet them.

Alf. Alone?

Mab. Why, what have I to fear? Hide thee behind the yew-hedge till the first search be past, and then—

Alf. Desert thee! Hide me! And I a Montresor! But be calmer, sweetest! Thy father is too good a man to meditate aught unlawful. 'Twill be but some short restraint, with thee for my warder. Calm thee, dearest!

Enter Colonel GOODWIN *and a Servant, from the House.*

Good. Shoot! Shoot instantly, Jonathan! Slay the robber! Why dost thou not fire? Be'st thou in league with him? What dost thou fumble at?

Jon. So please your worship, the wind hath extinguished the touch-paper.

Good. The wind hath extinguished thy wits, I trow, that thou could'st bring nought but that old harquebuss. Return for a steel weapon. [*Exit* JONATHAN.] Meantime my sword

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—I see but one man, and surely a soldier of the Cause and the Covenant, albeit aged, may well cope with a night thief. Come on, young man. Be'st thou coward as well as robber? Defend thyself.

Mab. Oh, father! father! Would'st thou do murder before thy daughter's eyes?

Good. Cling not thus around me, maiden? What makest thou with that thief, that craven thief?

Alf. Nay, tremble not, Mabel; for thy sake I will endure even this contumely.—Put up your sword, sir; it is needless. I yield myself your prisoner. At this instant, suspicions, even as degrading as those uttered by Colonel Goodwin, may, perhaps, be warranted by my equivocal position; but when I make myself known to him, I trust that he will retract an aspersion as unworthy of his character as of mine.

Good. I do know thee. Thou art the foul malignant Alfred Montresor; the abettor of the plotting traitor Ormond; the outlawed son of the lawless cavalier who once owned this demesne.

Alf. And knowing me for Alfred Montresor, could'st thou take me for a garden robber? Could'st thou grudge to the sometime heir of these old halls a parting glance of their venerable beauty?

Good. Young man, wilt thou tell me, darest thou tell me, that it was to gaze on this old mansion that thou didst steal hither, like a thief in the night? Alfred Montresor, can'st thou look at thy father's house and utter that falsehood? Ye were a heathenish and blinded generation, main props of tyranny and prelacy, a worldly and a darkling race, who knew not the truth;—but yet, from your earliest ancestor to the last possessor of those walls, ye had amongst the false gods whom ye worshipped one fair idol, called Honour. Alfred Montresor, I joy that thou hast yet enough of grace vouchsafed to thee to shrink from affirming that lie.

Alf. But a robber! a garden thief!

Good. Ay, a robber! I said, and I repeat, a robber, a thief,

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a despoiler. Hath the garden no fruit save its apricots and dewberries? No flower save the jessamine and the rose? Hath the house no treasure but its vessels of gold and silver? the cabinet no jewels but its carbuncles and its rubies? If ever thou art a father, and hast one hopeful and dutiful maiden, the joy of thine heart, and the apple of thine eye, then thou wilt hold all robbery light so that it leaves thee *her*, all robbers guiltless save him who would steal thy child. Weep not thus, Mabel. And thou, young man, away. I joy that the old and useless gun defeated my angry purpose—that I slew not mine enemy on his father's ground. Away with thee, young man! Go study the parable that Nathan spake to David. I believe that there is warrant enough for thy detention, but I will not make thee prisoner in the house of thy fathers. Thank me not; but go.

Mab. Father, hear me!

Good. Within! To-morrow!

Mab. Nay, here and now. Thou hast pardoned him; but thou hast not pardoned me.

Good. I have forgiven thee—I do forgive thee.

Mab. Thou knowest not half my sins! I am the prime offender, the great and unrepenting culprit. I loved him, I do love him; we are betrothed, and I will hold faithful to my vow: never shall another man wed Mabel Goodwin! Oh, father, I knew not till this very now how dear thy poor child was to thy heart.—Canst thou break hers?

Good. Mabel, this is a vain and simple fancy.

Mab. Father, it is love.—Alfred, plead for us!

Alf. Alas! I dare not. Thou art a rich heiress! I am a poor exile.

Mab. Out on such distinctions! One word from my father; one stroke of Cromwell's pen, and thou art an exile no longer. Plead for us, Alfred!

Alf. Mabel, I dare not. Thy father is my benefactor; he has given me life and liberty. Would'st thou have me repay these gifts by bereaving him of his child?

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Mab. We will not leave him. We will dwell together. Alfred, wilt thou not speak?

Good. His honourable silence hath pleaded for him better than idle words. Alfred Montresor, dost thou love this maid?

Alf. Do I love her?

Good. I believe in good truth that thou dost. Take her then from the hand of her father.—There is room enough in yonder mansion for the heir and the heiress, the old possessor and the new. Take her, and Heaven bless ye, my children!

Mab. Now, bless me, mine own dear father! and bless all the accidents of this happy night—Our projected elopement—and the little door that would not let us elope—and the wind that blew out Jonathan's spark of fire—and the old useless gun that, for want of that spark, would not shoot my Alfred. Blessings on them all!

"Well, Annie," said Tom, "are you sufficiently puzzled?" "Yes," replied Annie, looking graver than usual. "Pray," said she in a whisper to Mr. Mortimer, "is there such a word as matchlock? Is matchlock the name of that old gun?" "Yes," said Mr. Mortimer, taking the weapon in hand, and proceeding to explain to her the construction of the lock. "Then that's it!" said Annie; "matchlock's the word. I should not have found it out though," added she, "had it not been for the gun."

(No. III.)

On the whole the charades had gone off sufficiently well to induce a pretty general desire for a repetition of the same amusement. "Oh, yes," said Annie, when the question was started, "more charades, pray! more! more!" added she, dancing, and clapping her hands, like a child of four years old, when asking for another sugar-plum, or another story. "More! more!" cried Annie; and her brothers and sisters assented to her request, on condition that she herself took a

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part. "We want you, Annie," said Sophia; "we can't do without you; you must be my daughter." Annie demurred to this not a little;

> "And laugh'd, and blush'd, and oft did say
> Her pretty oath by yea and nay;
> She could not, would not, durst not play."

At last, however, she relented, like her prototype, Lady Heron, conditioning in her turn that Mr. Mortimer should play too!—Every body was astounded, first, at the liberty, and then at the extreme discrepancy of so grave a personage as Mr. Mortimer figuring in a charade. But the gentleman took the demand in excellent part; smiled, hesitated, apologized for his probable awkwardness on this his first appearance on any stage, and immediately joined the dramatis personæ behind the screen, from whence he emerged, to our great amusement, saucepan in hand, in the character of an old German baron.

CHARADE THE FIRST.

SCENE THE FIRST.—*A Dining-room in a Country Mansion.*

Baron Von BLUMACK, *Mr.* COLLINS.

(*The Baron is engaged in stirring and otherwise superintending the contents of a saucepan on the fire.*)

Mr. Collins. It does not signify talking, Baron! You do as you like, of course, in my house—Liberty Hall! No lady to interfere with you. But I cannot help saying that you are spoiling the perch.

Baron. My very good friendt, you know noding of de mattere.

Mr. C. Nothing of perch! Have not I been a "brother of the angle" any time these thirty years? Are not these very fish of my catching? And were they not half an hour ago leaping alive in my basket, little dreaming, poor things, that

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they should ever be turned into water zootse—or whatever you call your confounded slop? Know nothing of perch!

Bar. Noding of de cookery. To cache is von ding—to vat you call dresse is anoder.

Mr. C. A pretty dressing, truly! But did not Philips my housekeeper—I suppose you'll admit that she knows something of cookery?

Bar. No—she vas know noding eider.

Mr. C. Philips know nothing! Really, my dear Baron, I should have thought that the dinners which you have done me the honour to eat in this house might have carried with them a practical conviction, that the cook who dressed them was no ordinary kitchen drudge. But the dressing of perch is no disputed point in the gastronomic science—no "debateable land." All the world knows that they ought to be fried with Scotch oatmeal in fresh butter. Not that I care for the dish—I never touch it—but being the produce of my own rod, I have a kindness for the fish, and don't like to see them spoilt. Now, if you had suffered Philips to fry them—you'll allow that Philips can fry, I suppose?

Bar. Mistress Philippe is very clevere. It is moche piti dat she do not be teche to make water zootse. Here is de recepe in her own book—Lissenne—(*reads.*)—"First cache yore fish, den——"

Mr. C. Trash! Trash! Philips knows that no cook would stay long in my house, who dressed fish according to that recipe.

Bar. Will you ring de bell?—(*Mr.* Collins *rings.*)—De water zootse is almost be do.—(*A servant enters, and goes to assist the* Baron.)—Stay—you will nocke down de pot. I will take it op.

Mr. C. What do you want?

Bar. A deepe dishe, and two plaite, and bread, and boottere, and parsley, if you please, sare.—(*Exit Servant, and returns immediately with the things required by the* Baron.)—It is

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moche piti you have no Hambro' parsley, my good friendt! I can get you some from de graite inn at Staine; dey keep it in their gardenne on purpose for de water zootse. Now my dishe is done. Eat, and taste how nice it is, soupe and fishe and all. Taste a leetel in von spoon.

Mr. C. Taste! My dear Baron, I don't want to put you out of conceit of your luncheon—but the sight's enough for me. No tasting, thank ye. You don't really mean to eat all that slop of fish liquor?

Bar. Onless you will lete me give you a leetel. Now, my goodt friendt, onely von leetel drope, von drope in de ladel.

Mr. C. I! Heaven forbid I should spoil your appetite, my dear Baron, but I'd as soon take a ladleful out of the hog-tub. He's actually discussing the whole concern! fish, fish-liquor, bread, and butter, and parsley,—a precious luncheon! For my part, I shall never conceit the sight of a perch again, dead or alive. Even in the stream they'll have a twang of that infernal water zootse.

SCENE THE SECOND.—*A Lady's Morning Apartment.*

Mrs. CUTHBERT, *and* EMILY, *a girl of fourteen years old, who is standing by a cage with a dove at one end of the room.*

Emily. Oh, mamma! mamma! Pray come here, my dear mamma?

Mrs. Cuthbert. What is the matter, Emily?

Em. My dove, mamma, my dove! My beautiful dove!

Mrs. C. It is not dead, I hope?

Em. Oh, mamma, it's dying. Can't we do any thing to help it? Only see how it droops its poor pretty head; and the bright scarlet eye, so like the cornelian you showed me the other day, is almost closed, and the wing hanging down, and the soft plumage stained and rumpled, and the dark ring round its neck ruffled and displaced. Oh it must die, my poor pretty dove!

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Mrs. C. Nay, Emily, it is reviving. See, it is gathering itself up. No! you are right, it is really dying—shivering and gasping, and rocking on its perch. One faint quiver—the death quiver—and now it falls—dead, poor bird! quite dead.

Em. Every thing that I love is sure to die. It was but a few days ago that the nasty cat killed the other dove. I'll never have a bird again.

Mrs. C. I was afraid that this one would not live long after it had lost its companion.

Em. Ought not we to have got another, mamma? Why did not we get another?

Mrs. C. That would not have saved it, Emily. These beautiful creatures have within them the beautiful instinct of constancy, and are faithful in life and in death. Don't cry so, dearest. Come with me to the greenhouse, and Richard shall bury your poor favourite under the great myrtle. Did you never hear the old Italian story of the Pot of Basil? I'll read it to you this evening. And we'll bury your poor faithful bird; and your brother Henry shall write its epitaph. Think how he'll celebrate the tender bird that died of love and grief! Your dove will be as famous as that of Anacreon. Come, my own Emily, dry your eyes, and come with me to the greenhouse. [*Exeunt.*]

Scene the Third.—*An Hotel in Plymouth.*

Harcourt *and* Corbyn, *meeting.*

Corbyn. Ha! Tom! how d'ye do? I am glad to see thee, faith! I did not think to be so glad to-day; for poor Fanny and the little ones are just gone—and parting—I won't talk of it—Oh, it's a terrible tug to the heartstrings, and makes a man's throat feel as if he was choking. But I won't talk of it. How has the world gone with you?

Harcourt. Passably.

Cor. I'm almost as glad to see thee as if poor Fanny—but

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we won't talk of that now. Where have you been these two years? I have not set eyes on you since the poor old Zenobia was paid off, and we were turned adrift on the wide world. What quarter of the globe have you been in?

Har. Cruising about France and Italy. Civil people, Jack, and a fine climate; but nothing like old friends and old England. The women, to be sure, are handsome, and tight rigged.

Cor. Handsome! Zounds, you have never seen my Fanny! If you had only come an hour sooner—and yet her dear eyes were swelled out of her head with crying—you'd not have seen half her beauty.

Har. I'd have given a quarter's pay, Jack, to have seen the wife of your heart, beautiful or not.

Cor. Would you? You are just the good fellow you always were. Many a time Fanny and I have talked of Tom Harcourt; of the pranks we played together when we were Mids on board the Ardent—we were sad wicked young dogs, Tom; of the drubbing we gave the Yankees in the dear old Zenobia, and of your good nursing when the splinter wounded my leg—you see I'm a little lame still—no woman could have nursed me more tenderly—not even her dear self. Many a time has Fanny laughed and cried at the name of Tom Harcourt. Poor Fanny! I won't talk of her any more—only somehow I can't help it.

Har. I like to hear of her. Where did you first meet?

Cor. At Harry Morris's—You remember Harry Morris? I went to spend a month with him as soon as I came ashore, just, as he said, to recover my land legs; and there was Fanny on a visit to Mrs. Morris. I fell in love with her the moment I saw her sweet face, not altogether on account of its prettiness, pretty as she is, but because she seemed so good and so merry, such a kind, innocent, laughing creature. Before the end of the week I had popped the question, and before the month was out we were married.

Har. And her friends, did they consent?

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Cor. Why, there was a little difficulty. Her parents were dead, and her uncle, Sir Charles, (for she's a baronet's niece,) talked of the offers she had refused, and the offers she might still expect, and lectured, and quarrelled, and threatened never to see her again. But Fanny was of age, and stood firm. And now the old gentleman, who is really a good sort of man, is quite reconciled. We had neither of us much money; but her little joined to my little, and the hope of a war, and her good management, kept all things comfortable. God bless her! Oh, if you could but have seen us in our little cottage in the midst of the Devonshire hills—such a nest!—Can't you run over and see her?—It's only twenty miles off—The walls all covered with roses, and passion flowers, and jessamine—all within so neat and bright—then the little ones—two such cherubs! and the mother an angel. Oh, she has made my home a Paradise, Harcourt! Do go and see her. I wish I could go with you; but I can't, for I am under orders.

Har. So am I.

Cor. What ship?

Har. The Alfred.

Cor. The Alfred, Captain Hanley?

Har. The same.

Cor. Well, that is a comfort! That is a blessing! To think of our sailing together again!—give me your hand, Tom. the man I love best in the world! To think of our meeting in the same ship!

Har. I am as glad of it, Jack, as you can be for your life.

Cor. I'll write and tell Fanny directly.—Shake hands again, Tom—I'll write to her instantly.

Har. And tell her that we'll talk of her every day, and drink her health every evening.

Cor. You're the best fellow on earth, Tom. To think of our meeting! [*Exeunt.*]

The two debuts had given a great interest to this charade,

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and had even kept Mrs. Wilkins attentive, and Mr. Wilkins awake. Nothing could be more different than the success of the two new performers. Mr. Mortimer had astonished every body with his cookery and his broken English, and was admitted on all hands to be one of the best comic actors ever seen in any theatre: it was the very perfection of quiet humour, without a touch of caricature; and, as Tom observed, his happening to be a rich man and a gentleman, must be considered as a public loss.

Annie, on the other hand, had been delightfully bad, laughing where she ought to have cried, and putting her sister out by her blunders, which was the more provoking, as Sophia observed, because, on the occasion of a real dove's dying in the same way, Annie had cried for a whole morning. Annie confessed her bad acting, and begged her sister's pardon with great humility, but added, that she never could cry for any thing make-believe, not even when she was a little girl; and was quite sure she never should. Sophy forgave her, on condition of her not repeating her performance; and her father inquired of Mr. Mortimer whether their scene had not reminded him of the extempore play in Shirley's Bird in a Cage? To which Mr. Mortimer replied, that it had, adding, with a gallantry as unexpected as his good acting had been, that the part in question was by far the most charming of Shirley's charming old comedy. The three gentlemen then adjourned behind the screen for another charade, of which the new performer was again the hero, and which I shall subjoin, leaving the solution of that and the former one to the sagacity of my readers.

CHARADE THE SECOND.

Scene the First.—Lexington, *alone, in the superb library of a large country-house—the shutters closed.*

Lexington. Soh! Here I am once again in the mansion of

my forefathers,—the mansion that should have been mine,—the mansion that *shall* be mine, if art, and skill, and boldness, can make it so. Where loiters this old dolt of a steward, whose honesty—so the phrase goes—'tis a fine word that honesty, but I can bear the sound—whose honesty I must put to the proof? Can he be watching over the corse of his dead master? No, no! there be other guess mourners for that work; men of black, who vend grief by the day, and tears by the hour,—who shut out the sun, and make a darkness and a silence as of midnight in the midst of the light and stirring world. Precious mockery! as if death were not still enough,—as if the sunbeams could penetrate the leaden coffin, or the sound of laughter echo in the dead man's ear. If I should inherit—as I will inherit—this splendid property, of which I am the natural heir, then——but I must read once more my trusty spy's letter, and make myself perfect in the part which I am to play. 'Tis no child's lesson.—[*Takes out a letter and reads.*] "There certainly was a will, written, signed, and sealed last November, and placed in the charge of old Hollis. Your only chance is to gain him, which, if the will be not delivered up to your cousin, I think possible. Every man has his price—"—[*Looking up and speaking.*] Yours, Master John Solmes, has been a pretty stout one, as my pocket can witness.—[*Then reading again.*]—"Every man has his price. Old Hollis would probably be invulnerable to an actual offer of money, however considerable the sum; yet no man is likelier to yield to an artful mixture of flattery and indirect bribes. The points on which you must assail him are,"—[*continuing to look over the letter, and muttering rapidly to himself,*]—"old affection—grand-daughter Lucy—bitch Hebe—dog Hector—Hadley coursing meeting—Frimbleton Lea."—[*Again reading connectedly.*]—"These are the weak points of the citadel."—[*Then speaking.*]—Precious scoundrel!—unutterable coxcomb! But I must take his advice. Let me see once more. "Brindled dog Hector—

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Hadley coursing meeting—grand-daughter Lucy—little bitch Hebe—Frimbleton Lea farm—Hector—Hebe—Lucy—Hadley —Frimbleton—ay—Frimbleton Lea—Lea Farm." So now I am perfect.

Scene the Second.

Enter Hollis *to* Lexington.

Lex. Mr. Hollis? Yes, certainly, Mr. Hollis. The many years that have passed since I saw you cannot chase from my recollection the person on whose knee I so often sat when a little child, and from whom I afterwards received so much kindness when a boy at school. You are well, I trust, my good friend?

Hol. As well, please your honour, as I can expect to be under so heavy an affliction. It is a sore trial to an old servant to lose the master whom he had served for fifty years.

Lex. And such a master! But you look hale and hearty; just as you looked twelve years ago, when we parted in this very room, as I was about to return to Westminster after the Christmas holidays. Little did either of us think then, Mr. Hollis, that twelve years would pass before we met again; still less that our next meeting would take place under circumstances so disastrous. But still it's a comfort to find one old friend looking so well. I love old friends, Mr. Hollis. Nothing like an old friend.

Hol. You are very good, sir. But John Solmes, when he told me you wished to speak to me in private, mentioned something of business——

Lex. A moment, Mr. Hollis. Sit down: I love to talk to an old friend. Nothing like old friends!—How is my pretty play-mate, Lucy, with her blue eyes and her golden hair? Lucy must be quite the belle of the village by this time.

Hol. Passable, sir. A good girl, but homely,—a very good girl. But this business——

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Lex. I must renew my acquaintance with her. And your greyhounds? I find that you are still as famous for your breed, as when we used to go out coursing together with your old brindled dog Hector, the boast of the country side. No sport like it.

Hol. None, sir; none.

Lex. The only sport of the world in my opinion. Does Mr. Frederick Harley—my cousin I suppose I ought to call him—does that young gentleman course much?

Hol. Ah, well-a-day! not he, sir. He's too bookish.

Lex. Indeed! That's no good sign, in my opinion. Your reading young men, my good Hollis—But it is a delicate subject for you to talk of—too delicate, perhaps. A friend of mine, who was at the Hadley meeting, says that your bitch Hebe was the prettiest creature he ever saw in slips, and by far the fastest in the field. She ought to have won the cup.

Hol. Your friend's a judge, sir. 'Twas mere ignorance in the umpires, two fox-hunting chaps, who don't know a greyhound from a mastiff. I challenged the dog that was matched with her, the next day, for twenty guineas; but his master would not run him; pretended he was cut; all a sham; afraid of the bitch.

Lex. No doubt, my good friend; no doubt. Is Hebe a descendant of Hector?

Hol. Hector was the grandsire of her dam.

Lex. Ah, I thought you would not get out of the breed! What a superb dog that was! Such a chest!—such a neck!—such loins!—then his stern!—"Tailed like a rat—footed like a cat"—you remember the old lines;* Hector seemed born to

*The old rhyming description of a perfect greyhound runs thus:

Tailed like a rat,
Footed like a cat,
Necked like a drake,
Headed like a snake,
Backed like a beam,
Sided like a bream:

verify that description. I shall never forget the single-handed course we had with him one day at Frimbleton Lea, when he turned the hare twenty times in a space no bigger than this room, and at last caught her flying as she was going over the fence, then brought her straight to us, and laid her down at your feet. Those were pleasant days, Mr. Hollis. Who lives at Frimbleton Lea now?

Hol. Farmer Bennet, sir; but his lease is out at Michaelmas.

Lex. That's a nice tight farm now, Mr. Hollis, and would just suit you. Capital coursing; a pretty house; near enough to the Hall; and yet far enough off for independence. Just the place for you. If I were the landlord——an old, faithful servant like you, my good friend, ought to be considered. Rent should not stand in the way.

Hol. Ah, sir!

Lex. And if I—— Come nearer to me, Hollis; I want to speak to you as a friend, an old friend, an assured friend. Sit closer. It is twelve years since I was in this house. A long banishment, Hollis;—a severe punishment for the boyish frolic that caused my expulsion from Westminster. My late uncle was a severe man.

Hol. A good man, Mr. Edward.

Lex. A good man, but severe. Consider within yourself, Hollis: first to adopt the only son of his only brother, his godson, his namesake, his natural heir; then to discard that heir for a mere freak of youthful spirits, and bring forward in his place the youngest son of his youngest sister, not even the name to recommend him,—surely that was hard. I have heard it whispered that he repented of the measure, although the firmness of resolve on which he piqued himself forbade him to declare his change of feeling; that in his latter days

which last word means the fish of that name, an object of culinary luxury, and, therefore, of sport, familiar to our ancestors, but little valued by their descendants.

the name of Edward Lexington was more gracious to him than that of Frederick Harley.

Hol. Ah, sir! I am afraid that his will will not confirm this report.

Lex. His will! Is there such a document?

Hol. In my possession.

Lex. And the fortune is bequeathed——

Hol. To your cousin. All the estates, real and personal, are devised to his beloved nephew, Frederick Harley.

Lex. Unjust!—unnatural!—cruel!—monstrous!—From the earliest records of our ancient house, down to this very hour, its territorial possessions have descended in regular succession male from father to son, from brother to brother. Lexington of Lexington!—the noblest dukedom in the land did not seem more inalienable than that proud heritage.

Hol. Alack, sir! If it had been entailed——

Lex. Entails were never thought of. They would have seemed a weaker bond than the immemorial use of our whole ancestry. Frederick Harley the heir of Lexington!

Hol. Truly, sir, I lament——

Lex. Lament!—Hark ye, Hollis. There be cases in which men "to do a great right do a little wrong." It stands now within your power to render me a nobler justice than could be shown by the judge upon his bench, or the king upon his throne.

Hol. Sir! Master Edward!

Lex. The will, man!—the will!

Hol. What mean ye?

Lex. Is not the will in thy possession?

Hol. It is.

Lex. Go to! go to! I did not think thee so dull of apprehension. Say that there were no will, who would inherit?

Hol. Yourself, as heir at law.

Lex. Ay—I, the heir at law, the natural heir, the heir of custom and of justice; Lexington of Lexington. Hast thou

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been a retainer of that bold race until thy hairs are white with age, and dost thou not feel the magic of the name?

Hol. Alack, sir——

Lex. Old man, it was on thy knee that I first learned its spell; on thy knee, and from thy tales of love and of valour, of the brave knights and the fair dames of Lexington. Would the bold Sir Hugh, think'st thou, who in these very halls took such signal vengeance on the treacherous kinsman who usurped his lands during his long absence in the holy wars,—would Sir Hugh, think'st thou, have brooked this usurpation?

Hol. Ah, Master Edward, those days are past. We now live under the law, and to commit an unlawful act——

Lex. Unlawful! I ask thee but to remedy a great injustice. Unlawful! It shall be known only to ourselves. Heaven forbid that I should peril an old friend! I had rather—— Mark me, Hollis! The day that I take possession of these fair manors, the pretty homestead of Frimbleton Lea, with all its interchange of meadow and woodland, shall be assigned to thee in perpetuity.—*(Aside.)*—By heaven, he listens.

Hol. But to destroy——

Lex. A bit of blotted parchment! Pshaw! Hast thou drawn leases for fifty years, and tremblest at the crackling of sheepskin?

Hol. But a will? The very name hath something in it of sacred and irrevocable.

Lex. Irrevocable! Why, 'tis another name for mutability. Look into thine own mind, watch the course of thy own thoughts, thy own resolves, and then say if the leaves of the aspen, the sand of the desert, the fitful wind, the eddying ocean foam, be not firm and stedfast when mated with the will of man.—*(Aside.)* He wavers! *(Aloud.)* Hearken, Hollis. Do this, and perchance—Thou hast a fair grandchild, and I am yet unwedded—Do this, and—— Who comes here?

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SCENE THE THIRD.

Enter HARLEY *to the above.*

Frederick Harley!

Har. The same, sir. When I tell you that, apprized of your coming by Mr. Hollis, I have been the auditor of this conference, you will hardly wonder that the first exercise of my authority as master of this house should be to command your instant departure.

Lex. Command!

Har. I have said it, sir.

Lex. And to me, the rightful heir.

Har. To you, whose inheritance is forfeited by your vices. The heir! Why even if you had succeeded in corrupting a man whose honesty I believe to be impregnable, there are three other copies of the will. That, sir, is one. Take it, and depart. Depart, I say.

Lex. You shall dearly atone for these insults, Frederick Harley. We shall meet again.

Har. In a court of justice?

Lex. In the field.

Har. Never.

Lex. Wouldst thou shelter thy cowardice under the plea of kindred? Cold and scornful usurper! Are we too near in blood to meet in honour?

Har. Honour! And dares a suborner, a felon, a forger—dares such a one as thou to name the word? No, sir, 'tis not because we are of the same blood,—though I shame to think that one drop of thy polluted stream should flow in my veins,—'tis not the nearness of our kindred, but the difference of our natures, that prevents our meeting. The gulf that parts us is that which lies between fair fame and foul disgrace; between crime and honesty. I pardon thee, for thou art below my vengeance—but depart, I counsel thee, depart! Rear not thy

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crest at me, lest, reptile as thou art, I spurn thee and I crush thee. Speak not, but begone! I pardon thee, sir.

(No. IV.)

Again there was a wish to see the versatile performer, whose talent accident, or, as Annie said, her spirit of divination, had so strangely disclosed; and on the desire being communicated to Mr. Mortimer, it was most readily complied with. He, however, in his turn wanted to stipulate that Annie should keep him in countenance; for, in spite of her laughing and her blunders, the blushing little girl had been charming in her graceful awkwardness; but she refused positively, and her sisters, who had no mind for another scene of confusion, upheld her in her resolution, so that she sat on a low stool at her mother's knee, enjoying the performance, and guessing the words, whilst the others, with the usual mixture of criticism and applause, went through the following charades.

CHARADE THE FIRST.

Scene the First.—*A paltry lodging in a country town,* Ranter *studying a part.*

"Yes, Altamont; to-day thy better stars
Are joined to shed their kindest influence on thee."

Deuce take the folly of these country managers! A star can't come within fifty miles of them but they must be catching at it, when all the while they have better actors in their own company. Here's this man coming to play Lothario—He play Lothario!—and I must study Horatio, forsooth! a part of fifteen lengths at a day's notice. I to play Horatio! the most dull, prosy, hateful part—I'm sure that I shan't know two lines of it.

"Yes, Altamont; to-day thy better stars——"

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Confound all stars, say I.

"Yes, Altamont——"

There never was so vile a part!

"Yes, Altamont——"

Who's there! interrupting me, when I'm so busy.

Enter LANDLADY.

Landlady. When will you be pleased to have your dinner, sir?

Rant. I don't care. Don't bore me. Any time. Not at all.

"Yes, Altamont——"

Landl. Not at all, sir? my stars!

Rant. Stars again! Don't pester me, woman. How do you think I am ever to study my part?

Landl. Lord, sir! I have got as nice a beef-steak as ever was seen—and to hear you say you won't eat it!

Rant. Get the beef-steak, then, there's a good creature; and take yourself off. Have not I told you that I've fifteen lengths to study. [*Exit* LANDLADY.]

"Yes, Altamont; to-day thy better stars
Are joined to shed their kindest influence on thee;
Sciolto's noble hand, that raised thee first,"—

Another interruption!

Enter MAID.

Get away with you! Didn't I tell you that I'm not at home to any body?—

"Yes, Altamont,—"

Maid. Sir, Mrs. Stubbs, the washerwoman,—

Rant. Don't talk to me of washerwomen—

——"to-day thy better stars,—"

What do you stand staring there for?

Maid. Won't you be pleased to look over your linen, sir?

Rant. No.—"Yes, Alta——"

Maid. Nor to send the money, sir? Two-and-a-penny.

Rant. No, I tell you.—"Sciolto's noble hand,—"

Maid. Sir, Mrs. Stubbs won't trust—

Rant. Hang Mrs. Stubbs! and hang you!—Begone, I say.
[*Flinging her the money.* *Exit* MAID.]
I shall never study my part here while the world stands. I'll go into the next room, and lock myself in. That's my only chance.—(*Goes out repeating to himself,*)—"Yes, Altamont, to-day thy better stars—"

SCENE THE SECOND.—*A splendid Library.*

MR. MAYNARD *enters, speaking to a Servant.*

Not at home to any one, excepting Colonel Falkland and Mr. Ellis.—This failure of Bland's great house, however deplorable in itself, at least bids fair to put an end to my troubles as a guardian. Ever since Mary Conway has been under my care, she has been besieged by as many suitors as Penelope. We shall see whether the poor destitute girl will prove as attractive as the rich heiress. Falkland is an ardent lover, Ellis a modest one; Falkland is enormously rich, Ellis comparatively poor; but whether either——

Enter COLONEL FALKLAND.

My dear Colonel, good morning!—I took the liberty of sending for you.

Col. Falk. Most proud and happy to obey your summons. I believe that I am before my time; but where the heart is, you know, Mr. Maynard—How is the fair Mary Conway? I hope she caught no cold in the Park yesterday?

Mr. May. None that I have heard.

Col. Falk. And that she has recovered the fatigue of Tuesday's ball?

Mr. May. She does not complain.

Col. Falk. But there is a delicacy, a fragility in her loveliness, that mingles fear of her health with admiration of her beauty.

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Mr. May. She is a pretty girl, and a good girl; a very good girl, considering that, in her quality as an heiress, she has been spoilt by the adulation of every one that has approached her ever since she was born.

Col. Falk. Oh, my dear sir, you know not how often I have wished that Miss Conway were not an heiress, that I might have an opportunity of proving to her and to you the sincerity and disinterestedness of my passion.

Mr. May. I am glad to hear you say so.

Col. Falk. I may hope, then, for your approbation and your influence with your fair ward? You know my fortune and family?

Mr. May. Both are unexceptionable.

Col. Falk. The estate which I inherited from my father is large and unencumbered; that which will devolve to me from the maternal side is still more considerable. I am the last of my race, Mr. Maynard; and my mother and aunt are, as you may imagine, very desirous to see me settled. They are most anxious to be introduced to Miss Conway; my aunt, Lady Lucy, more particularly so. Mary Conway, even were she portionless, is the very creature whom they would desire as a relative; the very being to enchant them.

Mr. May. I am extremely glad to hear you say so.

Enter MR. ELLIS.

Mr. Ellis! Pray be seated.—I sent for you both, gentlemen, as the declared lovers of my ward, Miss Conway, in order to make to you an important communication.

Mr. Ellis. I am afraid that I can guess its import.

Col. Falk. Speak, Mr. Maynard—pray, speak!

Mr. May. Have you heard of the failure of the great firm of Bland and Co.?

Col. Falk. Yes. But what has that to do with Mary Conway?—To the point, my good sir; to the point.

Mr. May. Well, then, to come at once to the point. Did

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you never hear, that, though not an ostensible partner, Mr. Conway's large property was lodged in the firm?

Mr. Ellis. I had heard such a report.

Col. Falk. Mr. Conway's property in Bland's house! the house of a notorious speculator! What incredible imprudence! —All?

Mr. May. The whole.

Col. Falk. What miraculous folly!—Then Miss Conway is a beggar?

Mr. May. Whilst I live, Mary Conway can never want a home. But she is now a portionless orphan; and she desired that you, gentlemen, might be apprized of the change of her fortunes with all convenient speed, and assured, that no advantage would be taken of proposals made under circumstances so different.

Mr. Ellis. Oh, how needless an assurance!

Col. Falk. Miss Conway displays a judicious consideration.

Mr. May. I am, however, happy to find, Colonel Falkland, that your affection is so entirely centred on the lovely young woman, apart from her riches, that you will feel nothing but pleasure in an opportunity of proving the disinterestedness of your love.

Col. Falk. Why, it must be confessed, Mr. Maynard,——

Mr. May. Your paternal estate is so splendid as to render you quite independent of fortune in a wife.

Col. Falk. Why, ye-es. But really my estate, what with the times, and one draw-back and another—Nobody knows what I pay in annuities to my father's old servants—In fact, Mr. Maynard, I am not a rich man;—not by any means a rich man.

Mr. May. Then your great expectations from your mother, Lady Sarah, and your aunt, Lady Lucy.

Col. Falk. Yes, but, my dear sir, you have no notion of the aversion which Lady Lucy entertains for unequal matches;—matches where all the money is on one side. They never

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turn out well, she says; and Lady Lucy is a sensible woman, —a very sensible woman. As far as my observation goes, I must say that I think her right.

Mr. May. In short, then, Colonel Falkland, you no longer wish to marry my ward?

Col. Falk. Why really, my good sir, it is with great regret that I relinquish my pretensions; and if I thought that the lady's affections were engaged——But I am not vain enough to imagine, that with a rival of so much merit—

Mr. Ellis (aside). Contemptible coxcomb!

Col. Falk. Pray, assure Miss Conway of my earnest wishes for her happiness, and of the sincere interest that I shall always feel in her welfare.—I have the honour to wish you a good morning. [*Going.*]

Mr. May. A moment, sir, if you please.—What say you, Mr. Ellis? Have these tidings wrought an equal change in your feelings?

Mr. Ellis. They have indeed wrought a change, sir, and a most pleasant change; since they have given me hope such as I never dared to feel before. God forgive me for being so glad of that which has grieved her! Tell Mary Conway, that for her dear sake I wish that I were richer, but that never shall I wish that she were rich for mine. Tell her that if a fortune adequate to the comforts and elegancies, though not to the splendours, of life, a pleasant country-house, a welcoming family, and an adoring husband, can make her happy, I lay them at her feet. Tell her——

Mr. May. My dear fellow, you had far better tell her yourself. I have no doubt but she will accept your disinterested offers, and I shall heartily advise her to do so; but you must make up your mind to a little disappointment.

Mr. Ellis. How? what? How can I be disappointed, so that Miss Conway consents to be mine?

Mr. May. Disappointment is not quite the word. But you will have to encounter a little derangement of your generous

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schemes. When you take my pretty ward, you must e'en take the burden of her riches along with her.

Col. Falk. She is not ruined then?

Mr. May. No, sir. Mr. Conway did at one time place a considerable sum in the firm of Messrs. Bland; but finding the senior partner to be, as you observed, Colonel, a notorious speculator, he prudently withdrew it.

Col. Falk. And this was a mere stratagem?

Mr. May. Why really, sir, I was willing to prove the sincerity of your professions, before confiding to you such a treasure as Mary Conway, and I think that the result has justified the experiment. But, for your comfort, I don't think she would have had you, even if you had happened to have behaved better. My young friend here had made himself a lodgement in her heart, of which his present conduct proves him to be fully worthy. I have the honour to wish you a very good morning.—Come, Ellis; Mary's in the music-room!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE THE THIRD.—*A fashionable Morning Room.*

MR. *and* MRS. APPERLEY *at breakfast.*—MR. APPERLEY *lays down the Newspaper.*

Mr. App. Mrs. Apperley, my dear, I want to speak to you on a subject, on which, as a mother, you have every right to be consulted; the more especially as, from your excellent sense, I have no doubt of your being entirely of my opinion. John grows a great boy.

Mrs. App. Poor fellow! Yes. He'll be ten years old the fifteenth of next month. Time slips away, Mr. Apperley.

Mr. App. Ten years old next month! It's high time that he should be taken from Mr. Lynn's. These preparatory schools are good things for little boys; but a lad of ten years old requires to be more tightly kept.

Mrs. App. Just my opinion, Mr. Apperley. The sooner

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you remove the poor boy from Mr. Lynn's the better. They don't take half the care of him that they ought to do. Only yesterday, when I called there, I found him playing at cricket without his hat—really without his hat!—in the middle of that wind, and so delicate as John is too!

Mr. App. Delicate! Pshaw! There never was any thing the matter with the child but your coddling, Mrs. Apperley; and Eton will soon cure him of that.

Mrs. App. Eton! Do you mean to send John to Eton?

Mr. App. To be sure I do.

Mrs. App. Our sweet John, our only son, our only child, to Eton?

Mr. App. Certainly.

Mrs. App. Never with my consent, I promise you, Mr. Apperley.

Mr. App. And why not, Mrs. Apperley?

Mrs. App. Just look at the boys; that's all. Did not the Duchess tell me herself that the poor little Marquis came home with only one skirt to his jacket, and his brother Lord Edward with scarcely a shoe to his foot? There's a pretty plight for you, Mr. Apperley! Think of our John with his toes through his shoes, and half a skirt to his jacket!

Mr. App. Pshaw!

Mrs. App. Then such rude graceless pickles as they come back, with their manners more out at elbows than their clothes.

Mr. App. Pshaw!

Mrs. App. Then the dangers they run!—to be killed by a cricket-ball, or drowned in the Thames, or——

Mr. App. Pshaw! Mrs. Apperley. Where now, in your wisdom, would you send the boy?

Mrs. App. To Dr. Courtly.

Mr. App. And pray who is Dr. Courtly?

Mrs. App. Did you never hear of Dr. Courtly's establishment for young gentlemen?—never hear of Dr. Courtly!—

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So elegant, so comfortable, taken such care of; linen clean twice a day; hair curled every morning; almond paste to wash their hands; china dinner-service; silver forks, napkins, and finger-glasses.—Just ten miles off, only fourteen pupils, and happens to have a vacancy. Pray send John to Dr. Courtly, Mr. Apperley.

Mr. App. And so make a coxcomb of the boy before his time! Not I, truly. Leave the hair-curling and the almond-paste to the instinct of eighteen. In the mean while I choose that he should learn Latin and Greek; and for that purpose I shall send him to Eton.

Mrs. App. Lord, Mr. Apperley! what is a man the better for that nonsense? You are an Etonian yourself, and pray tell me now what good has your scholarship ever done you? What use have you made of it?

Mr. App. Hem! That's a point which ladies can't understand, and had better not talk about, Mrs. Apperley?

Mrs. App. Have you ever, during the eleven years that we have been married, read a single page of Greek or Latin, Mr. Apperley?

Mr. App. Hem! Why, really, my dear——

Mrs. App. Or indeed a page of any thing, except the newspapers and the Waverley novels?

Mr. App. How can you say so, Mrs. Apperley?

Mrs. App. Why, what do you read?

Mr. App. Hem! The Quarterly—I generally look over the Quarterly; and Pepys—I dipped into Pepys; and the magazines, Mrs. Apperley! Don't I turn over the magazines as regularly as the month comes? And, in short, if you could but imagine the attic zest, the classical relish, with which a sound scholar——but this, as I said before, is what you ladies can't understand, and had better not talk about. John shall go to Eton; that's my determination.

Mrs. App. He shall go to Dr. Courtly's; that's mine. How can you be so barbarous, Mr. Apperley, as to think of sending

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John to such a place as Eton, subject as he is to chilblains, and the winter coming on? Now the Doctor has studied surgery, and dresses——

Mr. App. Hang the Doctor, and hang John's chilblains. The boy shall go to Eton.—That's my last word, Mrs. Apperley.

Mrs. App. If he does, he'll be dead in a week. But he shan't go to Eton—that's my resolution. And we shall see who'll have the last word, Mr. Apperley—we shall see!

[*Exeunt separately.*]

CHARADE THE SECOND.

SCENE THE FIRST.—*An Apartment in an Artist's House.*

SIR GEORGE LUDLOW, MR. DELAVAL, *a Servant.*

Delaval. Engaged with a lady, you say? Be so good as to give your master my card. I shan't detain him an instant.

[*Exit Servant.*]

Sir George. And pray, my good friend, are you about to sit for your portrait? And is it to consult on costume and attitude that you have brought me hither?

Del. With no such intention, I assure you.

Sir Geo. You are not going to sit?

Del. No.

Sir Geo. Nor your pretty sister?

Del. Nor my pretty sister.

Sir Geo. And yet you send for so fashionable an artist as Allingham, when engaged with a sitter, with as little remorse as you would feel in summoning me or any other idle gentleman of your acquaintance. You wealthy heirs have no notion of the value of time. Engaged with a lady too!

Del. Tush, man, tush! Allingham's a good fellow, and my friend, and expects the summons. In short, I may as well confess at once what I have been trying to muster courage to

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tell you the whole morning, that the lady who is now sitting to him is one in whom I am particularly interested.

Sir Geo. Particularly interested! That means in love, I suppose. And the fair lady, is she particularly interested in you?

Del. I fear me, no.

Sir Geo. Well, for a man of your age, figure, and fortune, that avowal has a laudable modesty. But there is no aversion to overcome, I hope? No difficulty beyond that which a lover likes to vanquish?

Del. I trust not. In good truth, I believe her to be still ignorant of my passion. I met her in Paris; danced with her at two or three balls; escorted her to two or three show-houses; lost my heart; followed her to England; and have been in full chase of the divinity for the last fortnight, without being once able to catch sight of her! Never was mortal so unlucky. As fast as I pursued her to one place, so sure was she to be flown to another. At last I heard accidentally that Allingham was painting her portrait, and arranged with him to be let in *by mistake* this morning whilst she was sitting.

Sir Geo. And brought me with you to share your transgression, and spare your modesty?

Del. Even so.

Sir Geo. And the fair damsel's name?

Del. Is the Lady Elizabeth Delancy.

Sir Geo. Ah! she's a sweet creature that! You could not have chosen better. But why not make proposals to the father at once, and so save yourself all further trouble?

Del. Because I wish first to make myself acceptable to the daughter. What can Allingham be about! Ah! here's the servant.

Enter the Servant, who gives a note to MR. DELAVAL *and leaves the room.*

Sir Geo. A note! Only a note! What's the matter? You look as if some great calamity had befallen you.

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Del. Disappointed again! She's gone. Allingham writes me word that she and old Mrs. Delmont exchanged their times of sitting, and she—my she—the only she of the world—has been gone these two hours. Was ever mortal so unlucky?

Sir Geo. Never fret, man! you'll be more fortunate another time.

Del. I tell you, Ludlow, I never shall meet her. This is just what happened to me at Almack's, at the Opera, at the British Gallery, at a dozen parties. I no sooner go into a room at one door than she leaves it by another. There's a spell over me. We never shall meet.

Sir Geo. Pshaw! Pshaw!

Del. There's a spell upon me, I tell you? never was man so unfortunate! Too late again! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE THE SECOND.—DELAVAL'S *House.*

SIR GEORGE LUDLOW, *and* MR. DELAVAL, *reading a letter.*

Sir George. What can there be in that letter to excite such transports? You lovers are strange people. Yesterday, a little bit of written paper plunged you into the deepest affliction; to-day, another scrap throws you into ecstasies. Is that note from Allingham?

Delaval. Yes.

Sir Geo. Another appointment, of course; but how that can so entrance you; and what it is that you are pressing to your heart at that rate——

Del. Read.

Sir Geo. (reading). "Dear Delaval—Lady Delancy and Lady Elizabeth will be with me to-morrow at twelve, for the last sitting. Come at two, and I'll contrive, if I can, to leave you with them. At all events, you will have the satisfaction of seeing your goddess and her portrait. Ever yours. W. Allingham." Well?

Del. Read on; read on.

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Sir Geo. (reading). "P. S.—Lady Delancy, thinking that I had not succeeded in catching the very peculiar hue of the hair, has sent the enclosed as a pattern." Ho! ho! one of the auburn ringlets! Now I understand.

Del. Look at it, Ludlow; is it not beautiful? Auburn indeed! the true, the only auburn! Bright and dark as the rind of the horse-chesnut, but with a flickering light, that seems to turn each particular hair into a thread of gold. Look! look!

Sir Geo. I see.

Del. How completely this long wavy ringlet identifies her loveliness! If I had never seen Elizabeth, I could have sworn that she to whom this lock belonged must be beautiful; must have the rich yet delicate complexion, coloured like the flowers of the balsam; the dark grey eye; the ruby lip; the bright smile; the look of life and youth; the round yet slender figure—What are you laughing at, Ludlow?

Sir Geo. I laugh, my good friend, because I can't help it. We all know that Lady Elizabeth is a charming girl; but as to the beauty which you have been pleased to conjure up as the necessary appendage to one shining curl—Don't be angry, though, Delaval; I'll be as true and as serviceable to you as a sadder friend; for I'll go with you to-morrow, and hold the Countess in chat, whilst you talk to her fair daughter. She's a nice person herself, is Lady Delancy. I used to stand very well with her before she went abroad, and may be useful now.

Del. Thank ye! thank ye!

Sir Geo. And now I'll leave you, to meditate on the "loveliness of love-locks." Good-bye t'ye. "And beauty draws us by a single hair." Good morrow! [*Exit.*]

SCENE THE THIRD.—*An Artist's Gallery.*

LADY DELANCY, LADY ELIZABETH, SIR GEORGE LUDLOW, *and* DELAVAL.

Lady Del. Considering it then merely as an effort of art, you like the picture, gentlemen?

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Sir Geo. I, madam, think it a masterpiece. Mr. Delaval complains that it is less fair than the fair original. To me it seems that the artist has accomplished all that painting can do for beauty, by seizing and immortalizing one lovely moment.

Lady Eliz. It's a pretty piece of flattery, certainly.

Del. Flattery! Flatter you!

Lady Del. Yes; the likeness is flattering, that must be confessed, and, perhaps, not the less precious to a fond mother for that qualification. But what pleases me most in the picture, and would please me were all partiality out of the question, is the poetical feeling that it displays and embodies. No one would ever guess that figure to be a portrait. Standing, as she does, in that old-fashioned terrace-garden, with her hair hanging down her neck in those simple natural ringlets, and that rich antique costume, I can scarcely myself fancy that it is meant for my Elizabeth, so much more does it resemble one of the creations of Shakspeare, or of Beaumont and Fletcher, than a young lady of the present day.—Don't you think so, Sir George? Beatrice, for instance; for there is a little air of sauciness mixed with innocent gaiety in the expression—Beatrice, just before Hero unfolds her plot.

Del. Oh, happy, thrice happy the Benedict!

Lady Del. Or the pretty coquette, Anne Page—turning away from Master Slender.

Lady Eliz. No, no, mamma—not Anne Page. We have no Master Slenders now-a-days. Have we, Mr. Delaval?

Del. I could almost enact the part with such a lady-love, provided she would promise that there should be no Master Fenton in the play.

Sir Geo. To me, madam, the figure rather conveys the idea of Emily in the garden—Fletcher's Emily, when the very sight of her beauty from their prison-window stirred up such feud between The Two Noble Kinsmen.

Del. (To Lady Eliz.) No wonder that Palamon and Arcite loved the prison that blessed them with such sights.

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Sir Geo. You see, too, that she has a rose in her hand, Lady Delancy, and you remember the exquisite lines by which, in that matchless scene, she describes the flower?

Lady Del. Can you repeat them?

Sir Geo. I'll try. You'll pardon my blunders.

"Of all flowers
Methinks a rose is best.
It is the very emblem of a maid;
For, when the west wind courts her gentily,
How modestly she blows, and paints the sun
With her chaste blushes; when the North comes near her,
Rude and impatient, then, like Chastity,
She locks her beauties in her bud again,
And leaves him to base briers."

Lady Del. Beautiful lines! I did not know that you were so poetical, Sir George. You must give us the pleasure of seeing you oftener in Berkeley Square.—Come, Elizabeth.—Mr. Delaval, Lord Delancy will be happy to renew his Parisian acquaintance with you, if you will favour us by a call. Come, my dear.

Sir Geo. Allow me to attend your ladyship.

[*Exeunt* LADY DELANCY *and* SIR GEORGE.]

Lady Eliz. What could put Anne Page into mamma's head? and what could make you think of enacting Master Slender?

Del. Benedict, Fenton, Palamon, Arcite, even Master Slender,—any thing to have the privilege of calling myself your servant.

Lady Eliz. But we poor damsels have no servants now-a-days.

Del. Always I am yours.

Lady Eliz. Nonsense, Mr. Delaval! Mamma will be waiting for me.

Del. Always your servant and your slave.

[*Exeunt.*]

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(No. V.)

The beautiful reading of Mr. Mortimer, that most delightful and rarest of all acccomplishments, which had lent a merit, not their own, even to such trifles as album rhymes, was now put into nightly requisition on higher and worthier subjects. The old plays, which were the main object of pursuit to himself and Mr. Wilkins, formed the best possible collection from which to furnish forth his evening lectures, whilst his extreme delicacy of mind and of taste rendered him the very man to make of his reading an extempore family library, culling the beauties and avoiding the faults of the great dramatists, who, cast upon a coarser age, unhappily mingled the alloy of that grosser time with their own pure and indestructible metal. Accordingly, he read to us many of the finer parts of those delicious poets who followed in the train of Shakspeare, the mightiest of all, much as the stars in a brilliant night succeed to the still more glorious sun. The best scenes—or, in many instances, merely single speeches of Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Forde, Decker, Webster, and Chapman, came "mended from his tongue;" even Mr. Wilkins kept awake to listen to his own favourite passages, aided by such declamation, and his gentle lady feeling the charm of the voice, though scarcely, it may be presumed, comprehending the poetry, laid down her tatting and listened too. Tom and Sophia, both persons of considerable talent and feeling, were delighted, and Annie was in raptures. She implored him to read to her the scene of The Bird in the Cage, to which her father had compared her bad acting, and declared to every body that her father might say what he would of his idol, John Kemble, or her brother Tom of his friend Mr. Cathcart, but she was quite sure that Mr. Mortimer was a greater actor than either of them.

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So passed the evenings. In the morning my fellow visitor was a less constant companion of the studies of his host, than had been the case on his first arrival. Then from ten to six he was pretty sure to be found in the library. Now he was frequently a truant from the reading-desk, or the writing-table, and was more likely to be found on a wet day in the great hall, playing at battledore and shuttlecock with Annie, or even teaching her to handle a queue in the billiard-room, whilst, if the weather was fine, he was scampering on foot over the park, or on horseback over the country, with the same fair companion, and with none other. In short, it required no great stretch of observation to discover that our grave scholar, our shy avoider of the sex, our determined old bachelor, was, and, probably, for the first time in his life, in love, and that the object was a simple little lass young enough for his daughter. Whether he himself were equally enlightened as to the state of his own affections, seemed to me doubtful. A very few days settled the question.

A nephew of Mr. Wilkins's, a fine lad of eighteen, who had just entered the army, came to spend a few days at Haddonleigh, on his way to country quarters, partly, as it seemed, to see his cousins, and partly to display his new regimentals, of which he was as proud as a child of a new doll. Annie and he had, it seemed, been play-fellows of old, and fell very naturally into their former habits of familiarity, he putting her in mind that she used to be called his little wife, she turning him round and round to admire the exquisite tightness of his scarlet coat, and declaring that she would marry no man that was laced and braced after that fashion; that she had no notion of a husband who had not room in his clothes to play at battledore and shuttlecock, which she was morally certain her cousin Walter could not, screwed up as he was. There was nothing very astounding to a lover's feelings, one should think, in such a declaration as this; yet within two hours of cousin Walter's arrival, did Mr. Mortimer announce his own imme-

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diate departure, leaving the room as he spoke, to give orders to his servant, and make his intentions known to his host, who was, as usual, engaged in the library.

Two hours after, I met him in the gallery, and could not resist the impulse of speaking to him:

"So you are really going, Mr. Mortimer? Is not the resolution sudden?"

"I feared that it would appear so."

"We shall miss our evening lectures; and Mr. Wilkins will be sadly at a loss in his morning studies;—and poor Annie, what will she do for her play-fellow?"

"Has not she her old play-fellow, her cousin Walter? Suitable in age, in gaiety, in appearance, he who calls her his little wife? I have been on the brink of folly, as you, I fear, have seen; and ought to thank this boy's arrival for preventing me from plunging in. I leave her to a younger suitor."

"I thought so. But if you will trust a cool observer, this young man is as little likely to prove a suitor to Annie, as Annie to listen to him if he were. If he think of any thing except his regimentals (which is doubtful) it will be of some woman turned of twenty. Young boys seldom affect young girls. And she—oh! if you could but see how she is crying her little heart out;—and what a dear warm heart it is!"

"Oh! beware in mercy not to give me false hopes;—you know not what you do. It cannot be that one so unsightly, so unfashioned, a mere awkward scholar, and, comparatively speaking, so old, can have made any impression on the fancy of this sweetest and loveliest creature, beaming with youth, and life, and gaiety. It cannot be."

"Not on her fancy, I grant you; but on her heart. Will not that please you as well? You are still incredulous, Mr. Mortimer—but I think I know the mind of both. Only remain at Haddonleigh this evening, (I'll find you an excuse,) and suffer me to try a little experiment. If it do not succeed, you can take yourself off to-morrow morning. If it do, I must

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leave it to your own ingenuity to devise a reason for your farther stay."

He consented accordingly; and every body was so glad to detain him, though only for a few hours longer, that no one examined very scrupulously into the cause of his delay. But the evening passed wearily along, as the evenings before a separation are wont to do, and the whole company seemed relieved when I produced a roll of paper, declaring that to complete the title of Haddonleigh to figure as the scene of a romance, I had just taken that manuscript from the drawer of an old piece of furniture, called a commode. That I knew from my own experience, that dramas were sometimes found in old mansions, having once before met with such an adventure,* and that, as Mr. Mortimer seemed to have a cold, I should beg my friend Tom to read it to us. Adding, that I feared Mr. Wilkins would detect both the writing and the composition to be modern, though unluckily there were no Greek ee's.

And Tom laughed and began to read the little dramatic scene that follows. Annie at first hearing it listlessly, until a word or two forced her blushing and eager attention, and Mr. Mortimer entirely engrossed by watching her.

THE TWO KINSMEN.

A DRAMATIC SCENE.

PERSONS.—*Mrs. Conway. Helen Conway, her Niece.*

SCENE.—*An elegant Lady's Sitting-room in a great Country-house.*

MRS. CONWAY. HELEN.

Mrs. Conway. Why art thou silent, fairest niece? Three long
Eventful weeks have past since last we met;

* See note.

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Yet, save a sad sweet welcome, thou hast spoken
No word to me, my Helen. Art thou musing
On Hubert Lee?

Helen. Why should I muse on him?

Mrs. Conway. Nay, there hath been a moment when that question
Had caused thee blush, and start, and smile, and glow
With such a beauty as the summer sun
Lends to the summer flower—the rosy tint
Of love.

Helen. If such an hour there were, forget it,
As I have done, good aunt. Hast thou not learnt
That I'm a beggar? The long law-suit, waged
Betwixt my guardians and Lord Delamere,
Is given against me: I, that was accounted
The wealthiest heiress of the land, am now
Its poorest orphan—homeless, friendless!

Mrs. Conway. Helen,
Have I no home? And is not my home thine?
Are not my daughters sisters to thee, Helen,
And I thy mother? Sweetest, were I rich,
Rich should'st thou be. No thanks, no tears, my Helen!
Talk we of Hubert Lee?—ye were betroth'd:
What change can this chance work?

Helen. Have I not said
That I am poor?

Mrs. Conway. But he hath competence,
And will inherit wealth. I've seen his rich
And generous kinsman, good Sir Everard,
Thy kindest neighbour, and thy truest friend;
And he commands me say, "Not for her lands,
But for herself, he held his cousin blest
In winning Helen Conway; but since lands
So long held hers, and this her pleasant home
From earliest childhood, needs must be most dear

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To Helen's heart, he hath already purchased
Park, mansion, and demesne—a wedding offering
To the young bride: so that when Helen gives
Her own fair hand to Hubert Lee, she gives, too,
Her own fair heritage."

Helen. O, matchless friend!
Knows Hubert aught of this?

Mrs. Conway. Not yet.

Helen. I deemed so.
Say to Sir Everard, that I as dearly,
As truly thank him, as if I, in sooth,
Were like to wed his heir.

Mrs. Conway. And art thou not?

Helen. Never!

Mrs. Conway. Some lovers' quarrel!

Helen. No. Good aunt,
I well remember now that thou could'st ne'er
Abide my favour'd suitor, deeming him
A slight and selfish trifler: such he proves.

Mrs. Conway. Ha! say'st thou so?

Helen. A fortnight past, he came,
After a five days' absence, and was usher'd,
As usual, straight to me. Sad looks he wore,
And in a grave and measured tone inquired
If I had lost my all?—if hope were none
To try the cause again, and so reverse
The harsh decree? I answered, none. And then,
Shaking his head, and striving for a look
Of solemn wisdom, after decent pause,
My prudent wooer spake of poverty,
And of the duty all men owed their name
And kindred, not to wed without good hope
Of fair sufficiency; and then he sigh'd:
"If he were rich," he said, "but he was poor—
Wretchedly poor!" And then he cried "Alas!"

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And glanced at parting; seem'd to weep, and talk'd
Of broken hearts; and finally withdrew
In a well-acted passion of deep sorrow.

Mrs. Conway. Hast seen him since?

Helen. I walk'd down yester eve
To the dear rectory, to say—Farewell!
And there, within the lilac bower, I saw
My sad heart-broken swain in dalliance gay
With the rich widow, Lady Varney.

Mrs. Conway. Ay?
He woes *her* now?

Helen. Her or her jointure; 'tis
A shrewd doubt whether. As I deem, they came
To buy the license, for was never pair
Made such an ostentation of their love.
Enough of such a waverer! Trust me, aunt,
At loss of my whole fortune I account me
A happy woman, to have 'scaped this sordid
And mercenary suitor. Lady Varney
Hath drawn the worser lot; I pity her,
Even from my inmost heart.

Mrs. Conway. And I believe thee,
Truly, my Helen; all the readier believe,
That there is in thy gentle scorn no token
Of envy, grief, or anger; that thy voice
Is calm as be thy words; thy cheek unflush'd;
Thy lip untremulous; thine eyes undimm'd
By womanish tears. Thou must have striven well,
So soon to master love.

Helen. Nay, nay, good aunt,
'Twas liking, never love: a light, and gay,
And girlish fancy, wak'd by a trim shape,
A comely face, a gallant port, and fed
By flatt'ries delicate and feignings fair.
Love! O no, no! though, as his wife, bound to him

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By sacred duties and thrice-holy vows,
I should have loved him well, and never, surely,
In poverty could have forsaken *him*,
Yet, being left, I felt an instant joy
That I was free; for Hubert—frank, and gay,
And brilliant though he seem'd—lack'd the fine taste,
The fertile fancy, the high-reaching thought,
That make Sir Everard's eloquent speech a feast
To mind and heart. Be sure thou thank him, madam,
For his unparagon'd kindness: make as light
As may be of this tale; I would not fling
Dissension 'twixt two kinsmen, nor estrange
The elder from his heir.

Mrs. Conway. Be certain, Helen,
That Hubert Lee will never now be heir
To his kind cousin.

Helen. Is he not his next
Of kin?

Mrs. Conway. I grant ye.

Helen. Named in th' entail?

Mrs. Conway. I grant ye that, too;
But if Sir Everard wed—

Helen. Wed!

Mrs. Conway. Why, how old
Dost thou think him, Helen?

Helen. Five-and-forty.

Mrs. Conway. 'Tis
The outside of his age: full many a man
Hath been an older bridegroom.

Helen. But Sir Everard!

Mrs. Conway. Well, and Sir Everard! Is he not dear, maiden,
Graceful and gracious, mild and generous, kind,
And good, and wise; one that will make his home
The very shrine of virtuous happiness?

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Thrice blest will his wife be.
Helen. But surely, madam
He never means to wed. He said so, frankly,
When Hubert first address'd me; then the purchase
Of these broad lands for me and his young heir:—
He'll never wed.
Mrs. Conway. Make not too certain, Helen.
Sit here beside me; I have that to tell
Will work some wonder in thy little brain:
Listen. Sir Everard, all his life, hath been
An over-eager student: from a boy,
His very soul was in his books. At Eton,
At Oxford, in gay France, or graver Spain,
Or classic Italy, duly as here
In his paternal halls, his lamp hath burnt
At midnight, and hath paled before the ray
Of the bright sun-dawn, and hath seen him still
With Æschylus' or Homer's boldest page,
Or Plato's golden dream, or Pindar's lay,
Disclosed before his sleepless eyes. He lived
In those immortal men—in their rich tongue
Revell'd: it was a passion and a joy—
The blameless vision of his youth;—but youth
Wither'd before it. He grew lean and wan.
As one new-risen from a sick-bed, and bent
As by decrepit age, and silver hairs
Untimely blended with the manly brown;
Whilst shy reserve and learn'd abstraction crept
Over his fluent speech, and long disuse
Rusted the courtly ease which ladies love.
So that when, waking from his dream, he walk'd
Into the stirring world, he found himself
Unlike his fellows, sport of vain coquettes,
Jest of light coxcombs; and in shame and scorn
Strangely commingled, stole back to his books,

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Abjuring man and woman.
Helen. Surely, madam,
You do him less than justice?
Mrs. Conway. So he lived
Retired, scatt'ring his bounty through the land,
But chary of his presence, till one charm
Lured back the hermit to the world.
Helen. And what
Might that charm be?
Mrs. Conway. A child, a lovely child!
She was the niece of one his mother loved,
And often at the castle. 'T was an heiress—
Alas, poor thing, an orphan! and their lands
Join'd.
Helen. And was she the charm!—she! that poor child!
That silly ignorant child!
Mrs. Conway. That very child.
Gentle and playful was she as a fawn,
And innocent and loving, and most fair,
And most unconscious of her power; and he
Was all unconscious too, till the fair child
Grew into fairer woman: then he knew
That the strange passion that so thrill'd his heart—
The pleasure mix'd with pain—was love.
Helen. Alas!
Why said he not—
Mrs. Conway. Why, she was gay as fair,
And young; and he—Helen, it is the curse
Of true love, that it paints in tints of light,
Hues glitt'ring as the rainbow, the beloved,
And views itself all shadow;—he misdoubted
His age, his form, his gravity, unfit
To match with youthful beauty. Still he loved,
And from her innocent kindness he, perchance,
Had gather'd hope and courage; when his mother

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Droop'd in this northern climate, and he bore her
To Lisbon, where she died.
Helen. Alas!
Mrs. Conway. She died,
After long suffering; and when Sir Everard
At length won home—
Helen. Alas!
Mrs. Conway. He found the maid
Betroth'd to his next kinsman; and forgetting
All, save her happiness, proclaim'd at once
Him whom she loved his heir. Need I to tell
The rest, my Helen?—that the maid became
Poor, and her mercenary suitor left her
For a rich widow. Thou art silent, sweet,
And surely musing now. Is it of Hubert,
Or Everard?
Helen. And he loved the poor, poor Helen!
He—ever wisest, kindest, best,—he loved her!
And she for that light youth—when such a man
As Everard loved her!
Mrs. Conway. And still loves!
Helen. To vex him—
To be a grief to him!
Mrs. Conway. From this day forth
Thou'lt be his joy, fair niece. Blest was the hour
That made thee poor, and for yon sordid wooer,
Gave thee his noble kinsman!

"Well, Annie, what do you think of Helen's lovers?" asked her brother, who had marked her absorbed, and blushing, and almost tearful attention, and the unconscious glance with which she had, as it were, seemed to appropriate the character of Sir Everard to Mr. Mortimer. "What do you think of Helen's destiny? I don't ask how you like the scene, because we can pretty well guess at the authoress, and it would be hardly fair; but don't you think her heroine made a good exchange?"

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And what Annie answered I do not remember; nor can I describe how she looked.· But the effect was as decisive as that of the play in Hamlet. Mr. Mortimer did *not* go away the next morning; and four months afterwards, when her two sisters married and sent me gloves and cake, there came a third packet from dear Annie, also a thrice happy bride.

NOTE.—It once befell me to make in the proper scene for such an adventure, an old mansion in Northumberland, a discovery of the sort alluded to. When a very young damsel, some where between sixteen and seventeen, I accompanied my father on a long visit to his relations in the north of England. His head-quarters were at Kirkley, the seat of the late Mr. Ogle, a bachelor of his own age, his near kinsman, and very intimate friend; and I, although a great part of my time was spent amongst cousins of various degrees of remoteness, (for in Northumberland, as over the border, one counts kindred to the fortieth remove—a sort of English clanship,) was yet, not unfrequently, for a few days at Kirkley, and when there was installed by the gallantry of the owner as the youthful mistress of the mansion. A young lady, also a near connexion and namesake, was provided to bear me company, but I presided at the head of the table, ordered dinner, received visitors, and officiated in all points as lady of the house. How well I remember the mingled feelings of embarrassment and gratification with which I assumed my new dignity!—half delighted with the novel sense of importance, like the lass described by Wordsworth—"the girl of twelve, left one day mistress of her mother's keys,"—half sinking under shyness, and consciousness, and an anxious fear of not properly performing the duties of my office. I got on, however, exceedingly well. My cousin Mary, several years older than myself, and far more accustomed to society and the world, was a most kind and excellent prompter; the blushes and bashfulness of sixteen find a ready pardon from most people; and in my case,

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the old friends and connexions of the family would have forgiven much heavier sins to my father's daughter. Nothing could be more prosperous than my management. In domestic affairs I, undoubtedly, owed my success to putting myself entirely into the hands of the old upper servants, and reigning under the discreetest of housekeepers, and the most solemn of butlers. A king would as soon have thought of interfering with a leading measure of his prime minister, as I of interfering with Mr. Ambrose's arrangements of argands and wax-lights, or Mrs. Donkin's bills of fare: I even submitted the direction and distance of my drives to the old coachman; and they in return for my docility, not only cried me up as one of the cleverest and most thoughtful young ladies that ever entered a house, but did every thing in their power, by providing all that was likely to be wanted, to smooth my way, and make my task of directress easy and comfortable.

One evening, however, when two or three sportsmen had been dining at the house—fox-hunters in their scarlet coats, who happening to find themselves near Kirkley at the end of the chase, had adjourned thither, instead of returning to their several houses, and claimed the privilege of their dishabille as an excuse for adjourning to the library instead of joining the ladies in the drawing-room, Mr. Ambrose entered suddenly in great distress, to fetch some picquet cards.—"There should be such things," he said, "some where; but they were so seldom wanted, and his master passed so very small a part of the year at his own place, that during the short time that he was there all matters seemed in confusion. He should not wonder if none were to be found."

My cousin and I joined in the pursuit with great zeal, ransacking card-boxes, pulling out drawers, and flinging open cabinets with indefatigable perseverance, until at last two new packs were discovered oddly ensconced in a back-gammon table; when despatching Mr. Ambrose to the gentlemen with the long-sought-for treasure, we addressed ourselves to the

task of restoring some order amongst the moveables, which our hasty search had so grievously discomposed. During this process, I found it impossible to shut one of the drawers of a sofa table; and putting in my hand to discover and remove the impediment, I brought out a large roll of paper, the envelope of which had given way, and had effectually prevented the drawer from closing. The roll opened entirely as I laid it on the table, and presented to my astonished and delighted eyes a manuscript play.

Whether, according to the laws of honour, I ought to have read an anonymous and unprinted piece, not intended for my inspection, I really cannot tell. On better information I believe not; and certainly, at present to peruse surreptitiously the MS. work of an unknown writer would be about the last thing that would enter my imagination. Too many of such things come into one's hands in the common course of events, under the form of duties, to leave one much appetite for the task. But this was the first opportunity of the sort that had ever befallen me, and to a romantic and enthusiastic girl not yet seventeen, and passionately devoted to literature and the drama, the discovery of a MS. play in an old mansion in a remote northern county, at ten o'clock of a November night, must, under all circumstances, have been a gratification the most exciting, and the most delightful.

Influenced by these feelings, I opened and read the play. It was a drama in three acts, entitled Kruitzner, and taken from the Canterbury Tale of the same name, which has since given rise to the most effective of Lord Byron's Tragedies, "Werner," which owes so much to the fine literary taste and the splendid acting of Mr. Macready, and which has also been dramatized by the authoress herself, under the title of "The Three Strangers."

This story, always, and in every shape, so striking and so interesting,—and it is one of the few stories of the world which comes upon the reader as wholly original—was never

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more skilfully or powerfully developed than in the instance of which I speak: the play was written in bold and eloquent prose, a style of composition which, though seldom resorted to for that purpose, is admirably adapted to the serious drama— witness the character of Penruddock, and some few of Holcroft's happier scenes; and in many parts the very words of the tale had been retained, especially as far as regarded the fine part of Josephine, which preserved in the play, as in the story, its high predominance of purity and intellect, (in Werner, if I remember right, it is merely a sketch,) and must, I think, have been intended for Mrs. Siddons.

In short, I was in raptures with my discovery, which, after reading it aloud to my cousin, who echoed my praises, I went over again by myself, before going to bed; and although it probably owed something of its charm to the being a discovery, as "every child loves the violet of his own finding best," yet even now, on sober recollection, I incline to think that I did not greatly overrate the merit of the play. Very young persons, if they have any pretensions to refinement and literature, are far more apt to err on the side of fastidiousness, than on that of over-estimation. The power of admiring whatever is deserving of admiration, the nice and quick perception of the beautiful and the true, is one of the highest and noblest of our faculties, born of taste, and knowledge, and wisdom,—or rather it is taste, and wisdom, and knowledge, in one rare and great combination. Young people are seldom too richly endowed with that quality. On the contrary, they are in general rash and intolerant critics, keen in detecting faults, or what to their inexperience seems such, and petulant and hasty in proclaiming their ill opinion. The piece that, unrecommended by a great name, or by the praise of any one to whom they look up, carries them away, must be striking. Besides which, I had individually been a devoted reader of Shakspeare, Milton, and the early English poets; my notions of dramatic excellence were founded upon them. Even whilst delighting to see John

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Kemble in Rolla, The Stranger, and the series of plays from Kotzebue, which had just passed out of fashion, I had, child as I was, felt their meretriciousness and their falseness. My admiration was by no means easily won; and I feel assured, from the recollection of my own enthusiasm, that "Kruitzner" must have possessed considerable merit.

The next morning, at breakfast, I mentioned to my kind host the treasure that I had discovered, inquiring of him if he knew the author, or could guess how the MS. had found its way into the drawer of a sofa table in his drawing-room. To the first question he answered decidedly in the negative; he had no knowledge, nor could form any guess as to the author; but it had, most probably, been brought thither by Mr. Sheridan, (whose last wife was his sister,) and who had spent some weeks at Kirkley the preceding summer. It was just in Sheridan's way, he added, to bring down a promising or a highly recommended play with the intention of looking it over, and then to leave it unread and unopened.

Of course, I urged Mr. Ogle most strongly to write to Mr. Sheridan, or his sister, on the subject; and he promised to comply with my request. Probably he did so, for he was a just and honourable, though a very indolent man; but although I frequently inquired as to the fate of the play, I never heard that any good was produced by his application. Little, indeed, was to be expected. Sheridan, ruined in fortune, and sinking in health, had ceased to have any power in the theatre. Our kind host himself died shortly after my visit; and another relation of ours, (the Lady Charles Aynsley,) to whom the unlucky MS. had been lent by Mr. Ogle, died also within a brief period. Every one interested in that unfortunate drama passed away excepting myself, and I have never been able to recover it, or to trace its origin or its destiny. It came upon me and disappeared like a dream.

Frequently, however, in the course of my own theatrical career, its anxieties and its disappointments, have I thought

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with intense sympathy of the unknown author of Kruitzner, of his fruitless expectations, his weary suspense, his unrewarded toil. Such a circumstance could only have occurred to Mr. Sheridan; it was an extreme case, characteristic of and peculiar to him, and most strikingly different from the prompt and punctual attention which, so far as my experience goes, I have always received from every manager with whom I have had to do; but that it should have occurred, if only once, to a production of any merit is grievous to think of, a signal instance of the oppressions of the world, and of the calamities which beset dramatic genius.

THE RAT-CATCHER.

A SKETCH.

Beautifully situated on a steep knoll, overhanging a sharp angle in the turnpike road, which leads through our village of Aberleigh, stands a fantastic rustic building, with a large yew-tree on one side, a superb weeping ash hanging over it on the other, a clump of elms forming a noble back-ground behind, and all the prettinesses of porches garlanded with clematis, windows mantled with jessamine, and chimneys wreathed with luxuriant ivy, adding grace to the picture. To form a picture, most assuredly, it was originally built,—a point of view, as it is called, from Allonby Park, to which the by-road that winds round this inland cape, or headland, directly leads; and most probably it was also copied from some book of tasteful designs for lodges or ornamented cottages, since not only the building itself, but the winding path that leads up the acclivity, and the gate which gives entrance to the little garden, smack of the pencil and the graver.

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For a picture certainly, and probably from a picture, was that cottage erected, although its ostensible purpose was merely that of a receiving-house for letters and parcels for the Park; to which the present inhabitant, a jolly, bustling, managing dame, of great activity and enterprise in her own peculiar line, has added the profitable occupation of a thriving and well-accustomed village-shop; contaminating the picturesque old-fashioned bay-window of the fancy letter-house, by the vulgarities of red-herrings, tobacco, onions, and salt-butter; a sight which must have made the projector of her elegant dwelling stare again,—and forcing her customers to climb up and down an ascent almost as steep as the roof of a house, whenever they wanted a penny-worth of needles, or a half-penny-worth of snuff; a toil whereat some of our poor old dames groaned aloud. Sir Henry threatened to turn her out, and her customers threatened to turn her off; but neither of these events happened. Dinah Forde appeased her landlord and managed her customers: for Dinah Forde was a notable woman; and it is really surprising what great things, in a small way, your notable woman will compass.

Besides Mrs. Dinah Forde, and her apprentice, a girl of ten years old, the letter-house had lately acquired another occupant, in the shape of Dinah's tenant or lodger,—I don't know which word best expresses the nature of the arrangement,—my old friend, Sam Page, the Rat-catcher; who, together with his implements of office, two ferrets, and four mongrels, inhabited a sort of shed or outhouse at the back of the premises,—serving, "especially the curs," as Mrs. Forde was wont to express herself, "as a sort of guard and protection to a lone woman's property."

Sam Page was, as I have said, an old acquaintance of ours, although neither as a resident of Aberleigh, nor in his capacity of rat-catcher, both of which were recent assumptions. It was, indeed, a novelty to see Sam Page as a resident any where. His abode seemed to be the highway. One should

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have as soon expected to find a gipsy within stone walls, as soon have looked for a hare in her last year's form, or a bird in her old nest, as for Sam Page in the same place a month together: so completely did he belong to that order which the lawyers call vagrants, and the common people designate by the significant name of trampers; and so entirely of all rovers did he seem the most roving, of all wanderers the most unsettled. The winds, the clouds, even our English weather, were but a type of his mutability.

Our acquaintance with him had commenced above twenty years ago, when, a lad of some fifteen or thereaway, he carried muffins and cakes about the country. The whole house was caught by his intelligence and animation, his light active figure, his keen grey eye, and the singular mixture of shrewdness and good-humour in his sharp but pleasant features. Nobody's muffins could go down but Sam Page's. We turned off our old stupid deaf cakeman, Simon Brown, and appointed Sam on the instant. (N. B. This happened at the period of a general election, and Sam wore the right colour, and Simon the wrong.) Three times a week he was to call. Faithless wretch!—he never called again. He took to selling election ballads, and carrying about hand-bills. We waited for him a fortnight, went muffinless for fourteen days, and then, our candidate being fairly elected, and blue and yellow returned to their original non-importance, were fain to put up once more with poor old deaf Simon Brown.

Sam's next appearance was in the character of a letter-boy, when he and a donkey set up a most spirited opposition to Thomas Hearne and the post-cart. Every body was dissatisfied with Thomas Hearne, who had committed more sins than I can remember, of forgetfulness, irregularity, and all manner of postman-like faults; and Sam, when applying for employers, made a most successful canvass, and for a week performed miracles of punctuality. At the end of that time he began to commit, with far greater vigour than his predecessor, Thomas

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Hearne, the several sins for which that worthy had been discarded. On Tuesday he forgot to call for the bag in the evening; on Wednesday he omitted to bring it in the morning; on Thursday he never made his appearance at all; on Friday his employers gave him warning; and on Saturday they turned him off. So ended this hopeful experiment.

Still, however, he continued to travel the country in various capacities. First, he carried a tray of casts; then a basket of Staffordshire ware; then he cried cherries; then he joined a troop of ruddle-men, and came about redder than a red Indian; then he sported a barrel-organ, a piece of mechanism of no small pretensions, having two sets of puppets on the top, one of girls waltzing, the other of soldiers at drill; then he drove a knife-grinder's wheel; then he led a bear and a very accomplished monkey; then he escorted a celebrated company of dancing dogs; and then, for a considerable time, during which he took a trip to India and back, we lost sight of him.

He reappeared, however, at B. Fair, where one year he was showman to the Living Skeleton, and the next a performer in the tragedy of the Edinburgh Murders, as exhibited every half-hour at the price of a penny to each person. Sam showed so much talent for melo-drame, that we fully expected to find him following his new profession, which offered all the advantage of the change of place and of character which his habits required; and on his being again, for several months, an absentee, had little doubt but he had been promoted from a booth to a barn, and even looked for his name amongst a party of five strollers, three men and two women, who issued playbills at Aberleigh, and performed tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, and pantomime, with all the degrees and compounds thereof described by Polonius, in the great room at the Rose, divided for the occasion into a row of chairs called the Boxes, at a shilling per seat, and two of benches called the Pit, at sixpence. I even suspected that a Mr. Theodore Fitzhugh, the genius of the company, might be Sam Page fresh christened

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But I was mistaken. Sam. when I saw him again, and mentioned my suspicion, pleaded guilty to a turn for the drama; he confessed that he liked acting of all things, especially tragedy, "it was such fun." But there was a small obstacle to his pursuit of the more regular branches of the histrionic art—the written drama: our poor friend could not read. To use his own words, "he was no scholar;" and on recollecting certain small aberrations which had occurred during the three days that he carried the letter-bag, and professed to transact errands, such as the mis-delivery of notes, and the non-performance of written commissions, we were fain to conclude that, instead of having, as he expressed it, "somehow or other got rid of his learning," learning was a blessing which Sam had never possessed, and that a great luminary was lost to the stage simply from the accident of not knowing his alphabet.

Instead of being, as we had imagined, ranting in Richard, or raving in Lear, our unlucky hero had been amusing himself by making a voyage to the West Indies, and home by the way of America, having had some thoughts of honouring the New World by making it the scene of his residence, or rather of his peregrinations; and a country where the whole population seems moveable, would, probably, have suited him: but the yellow fever seized him, and pinned him fast at the very beginning of his North American travels; and, sick and weary, he returned to England, determined, as he said, "to take a room and live respectably."

The apartment on which he fixed was, as I have intimated, an outhouse belonging to Mrs. Dinah Forde, in which he took up his abode the beginning of last summer, with his two ferrets, harmless, foreign-looking things, (no native English animal has so outlandish an appearance as the ferret, with its long limber body, its short legs, red eyes, and ermine-looking fur,) of whose venom, gentle as they looked, he was wont to boast amain; four little dogs, of every variety of mongrel ugliness, whose eminence in the same quality nobody could

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doubt, for one had lost an eye in battle, and one an ear, the third halted in his fore quarters, and the fourth limped behind; and a jay of great talent and beauty, who turned his pretty head this way and that, and bent and bowed most courteously when addressed, and then responded in words equally apt and courteous to all that was said to him. Mrs. Dinah Forde fell in love with that jay at first sight; borrowed him of his master, and hung him at one side of her door, where he soon became as famous all through the parish as the talking bird in the Arabian Tales, or the parrot Vert-vert, immortalized by Gresset.

Sam's own appearance was as rat-catcher-like, I had almost said as venomous, as that of his retinue. His features sharper than ever, thin, and worn, and sallow, yet arch and good-humoured withal; his keen eye and knowing smile, his pliant active figure, and the whole turn of his equipment, from the shabby straw hat to the equally shabby long gaiters, told his calling almost as plainly as the sharp heads of the ferrets, which were generally protruded from the pockets of his dirty jean jacket, or the bunch of dead rats with which he was wont to parade the streets of B. on a market-day. He seemed, at last, to have found his proper vocation; and having stuck to it for four or five months, with great success and reputation, there seemed every chance of his becoming stationary at Aberleigh.

In his own profession his celebrity was, as I have said, deservedly great. The usual complaint against rat-catchers, that they take care not to ruin the stock, that they are sure to leave breeders enough, could not be applied to Sam; who, poor fellow, never was suspected of forethought in his life; and who, in this case, had evidently too much delight in the chase himself, to dream of checking or stopping it, whilst there was a rat left unslain. On the contrary, so strong was the feeling of his sportsmanship, and that of his poor curs, that one of his grand operations, on the taking in of a wheat-rick, for instance, or the clearing out of a barn, was sure to be attended by all the idle boys and unemployed men in the village,

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—by all, in short, who, under the pretence of helping, could make an excuse to their wives, their consciences, or the parish-officers. The grand battue, on emptying Farmer Brookes's great barn, will be long remembered in Aberleigh; there was more noise made, and more beer drunk, than on any occasion since the happy marriage of Miss Phœbe and the patten-maker; it even emulated the shouts and the tipsiness of the B. election—and that's a bold word! The rats killed were in proportion to the din—and that is a bold word too! I am really afraid to name the number, it seemed to myself, and would appear to my readers, so incredible. Sam and Farmer Brookes were so proud of the achievement, that they hung the dead game on the lower branches of the great oak outside the gate, after the fashion practised by mole-catchers, to the unspeakable consternation of a cockney cousin of the good farmer's, a very fine lady, who had never in her life before been out of the sound of Bow bell, and who, happening to catch sight of this portentous crop of acorns in passing under the tree, caused her husband, who was driving her, to turn the gig round, and, notwithstanding remonstrance and persuasion, and a most faithful promise that the boughs should be dismantled before night, could not be induced to set foot in a place where the trees were, to use her own words, "so heathenish," and betook herself back to her own domicile at Holborn Bars, in great and evident perplexity as to the animal or vegetable quality of the oak in question.*

Another cause of the large assemblage at Sam's rat-hunts was, besides the certainty of good sport, the eminent popularity of the leader of the chase. Sam was a universal favourite. He had good-fellowship enough to conciliate the

* Moles are generally, and rats occasionally, strung on willows when killed; not much to the improvement of the beauty of the scenery. I don't know any thing that astounds a Londoner more than the sight of a tree bearing such fruit. The plum-pudding tree, whereof mention is made in the pleasant and veracious travels of the Baron Munchausen, could not appear more completely a *lusus naturæ*.

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dissipated, and yet stopped short of the licence which would have disgusted the sober,—was pleasant-spoken, quick, lively, and intelligent,—sang a good song, told a good story, and had a kindness of temper, and a lightness of heart, which rendered him a most exhilarating and coveted companion to all in his own station. He was, moreover, a proficient in country games; and so eminent at cricket especially, that the men of Aberleigh were no sooner able, from his residence in the parish, to count him amongst their eleven, than they challenged their old rivals, the men of Hinton, and beat them forthwith.

Two nights before the return match, Sam, shabbier even than usual, and unusually out of spirits, made his appearance at the house of an old Aberleigh cricketer, still a patron and promoter of that noble game, and the following dialogue took place between them:

"Well, Sam, we are to win this match."

"I hope so, please your honour. But I'm sorry to say I shan't be at the winning of it."

"Not here, Sam! What, after rattling the stumps about so gloriously last time, won't you stay to finish them now? Only think how those Hinton fellows will crow! You must stay over Wednesday."

"I can't, your honour. 'Tis not my fault. But, here I've had a lawyer's letter on the part of Mrs. Forde, about the trifle of rent, and a bill that I owe her; and if I'm not off to-night, Heaven knows what she'll do with me!"

"The rent—that can't be much. Let's see if we can't manage"—

"Ay, but there's a longish bill, sir," interrupted Sam. "Consider, we are seven in family."

"Seven!" interrupted, in his turn, the other interlocutor.

"Ay, sir, counting the dogs and the ferrets, poor beasts! for I suppose she has not charged for the jay's board, though 'twas that unlucky bird made the mischief."

"The jay! What could he have to do with the matter?

Dinah used to be as fond of him as if he had been her own child! and I always thought Dinah Forde a good-natured woman."

"So she is, in the main, your honour," replied Sam, twirling his hat, and looking half shy and half sly, at once knowing and ashamed. "So she is, in the main; but this, somehow, is a particular sort of an affair. You must know, sir," continued Sam, gathering courage as he went on, "that at first the widow and I were very good friends, and several of these articles which are charged in the bill, such as milk for the ferrets, and tea and lump-sugar, and young onions for myself, I verily thought were meant as presents; and so I do believe at the time she did mean them. But, howsoever, Jenny Dobbs, the nursery-maid at the Park, (a pretty black-eyed lass—perhaps your honour may have noticed her walking with the children,) she used to come out of an evening like to see us play cricket, and then she praised my bowling, and then I talked to her, and so at last we began to keep company; and the jay, owing, I suppose, to hearing me say so sometimes, began to cry out, "Pretty Jenny Dobbs!"

"Well, and this affronted the widow?"

"Past all count, your honour. You never saw a woman in such a tantrum. She declared I had taught the bird to insult her, and posted off to Lawyer Latitat. And here I have got this letter, threatening to turn me out, and put me in gaol, and what not, from the lawyer; and Jenny, a false-hearted jade, finding how badly matters are going with me, turns round and says, that she never meant to have me, and is going to marry the French Mounseer, (Sir Henry's French valet,) a foreigner and a papist, who may have a dozen wives before for any thing she can tell. These women are enough to drive a man out of his senses!" And poor Sam gave his hat a mighty swing, and looked likely to cry from a mixture of grief, anger, and vexation. "These women are enough to drive a man mad!" reiterated Sam, with increased energy.

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"So they are, Sam," replied his host, administering a very efficient dose of consolation, in the shape of a large glass of Cognac brandy; which, in spite of its coming from his rival's country, Sam swallowed with hearty good-will. "So they are. But Jenny 's not worth fretting about: she's a poor feckless thing after all, fitter for a Frenchman than an Englishman. If I were you, I would make up to the widow: she's a person of property, and a fine comely woman into the bargain. Make up to the widow, Sam; and drink another glass of brandy to your success!"

And Sam followed both pieces of advice. He drank the brandy, and he made up to the widow, the former part of the prescription probably inspiring him with courage to attempt the latter; and the lady was propitious, and the wedding speedy: and the last that I heard of them was, the jay's publishing the banns of marriage, under a somewhat abridged form, from his cage at the door of Mrs. Dinah's shop, (a proceeding at which she seemed, outwardly, scandalized; but over which, it may be suspected, she chuckled inwardly, or why not have taken in the cage?) and the French valet's desertion of Jenny Dobbs, whom he, in his turn, jilted; and the dilemma of Lawyer Latitat, who found himself obliged to send in his bill for the threatening letter to the identical gentleman to whom it was addressed. For the rest, the cricket match was won triumphantly, the wedding went off with great *eclât*, and our accomplished rat-catcher is, we trust, permanently fixed in our good village of Aberleigh.

THE COUSINS.

TOWARDS the middle of the principal street in my native town of Cranley, stands, or did stand, for I speak of things that

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happened many years back, a very long-fronted, very regular, very ugly brick house, whose large gravelled court, flanked on each side by offices reaching to the street, was divided from the pavement by iron gates and palisades, and a row of Lombardy poplars, rearing their slender columns so as to veil, without shading, a mansion which evidently considered itself, and was considered by its neighbours, as holding the first rank in the place. That mansion, indisputably the best in the town, belonged, of course, to the lawyer; and that lawyer was, as may not unfrequently be found in small places, one of the most eminent solicitors in the county.

Richard Molesworth, the individual in question, was a person obscurely born and slenderly educated, who, by dint of prudence, industry, integrity, tact, and luck, had risen through the various gradations of writing clerk, managing clerk, and junior partner, to be himself the head of a great office, and a man of no small property or slight importance. Half of Cranley belonged to him, for he had the passion for brick and mortar often observed amongst those who have accumulated large fortunes in totally different pursuits, and liked nothing better than running up rows and terraces, repairing villas, and rebuilding farm-houses. The better half of Cranley called him master, to say nothing of six or seven snug farms in the neighbourhood, of the goodly estate and manor of Sanford, famous for its preserves and fisheries, or of a command of floating capital which borrowers, who came to him with good securities in their hands, found almost inexhaustible. In short, he was one of those men with whom every thing had prospered through life; and in spite of a profession too often obnoxious to an unjust, because sweeping, prejudice, there was a pretty universal feeling amongst all who knew him that his prosperity was deserved. A kind temper, a moderate use of power and influence, a splendid hospitality, and that judicious liberality which shows itself in small things as well as in great ones, (for it is by twopenny savings that men get an ill name,)

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served to insure his popularity with high and low. Perhaps, even his tall, erect, portly figure, his good-humoured countenance, cheerful voice, and frank address, contributed something to his reputation; his remarkable want of pretension or assumption of any sort certainly did, and as certainly the absence of every thing striking, clever, or original in his conversation. That he must be a man of personal as well as of professional ability, no one tracing his progress through life could for a moment doubt; but, reversing the witty epigram on our wittiest monarch, he reserved his wisdom for his actions, and whilst all that he *did* showed the most admirable sense and judgment, he never *said* a word that rose above the level of the merest common-place, trivial, inoffensive, civil, and safe.

So accomplished, both in what he was and in what he was not, our lawyer, at the time of which we write, had been for many years the oracle of the country gentlemen, held all public offices, not inconsistent with each other, which their patronage could bestow, and in the shape of stewardships, trusts, and agencies, managed half the landed estates in the county. He was even admitted into visiting intercourse, on a footing of equality very uncommon in the aristocratic circles of country society—a society which is, for the most part, quite as exclusive as that of London, though in a different way. For this he was well suited, not merely by his own unaffected manners, high animal spirits, and nicety of tact, but by the circumstances of his domestic arrangements. After having been twice married, Mr. Molesworth found himself, at nearly sixty, a second time a widower.

His first wife had been a homely, frugal, managing woman, whose few hundred pounds and her saving habits had, at that period of his life, for they were early united, conduced in their several ways to enrich and benefit her equally thrifty but far more aspiring husband. She never had a child; and, after doing him all possible good in her lifetime, was so kind

as to die just as his interest and his ambition required more liberal housekeeping and higher connexion, each of which, as he well knew, would repay its cost. For connexion accordingly he married, choosing the elegant though portionless sister of a poor baronet, by whom he had two daughters, at intervals of seven years; the eldest being just of sufficient age to succeed her mother as mistress of the family, when she had the irreparable misfortune to lose the earliest, the tenderest, and the most inestimable friend that a young woman can have. Very precious was the memory of her dear mother to Agnes Molesworth! Although six years had passed between her death and the period at which our little story begins, the affectionate daughter had never ceased to lament her loss.

It was to his charming daughters that Mr. Molesworth's pleasant house owed its chief attraction. Conscious of his own deficient education, no pains or money had been spared in accomplishing them to the utmost height of fashion.

The least accomplished was, however, as not unfrequently happens, by far the most striking; and many a high-born and wealthy client, disposed to put himself thoroughly at ease at his solicitor's table, and not at all shaken in his purpose by the sight of the pretty Jessy,—a short, light, airy girl, with a bright sparkling countenance, all lilies and roses, and dimples and smiles, sitting, exquisitely dressed, in an elegant morning room, with her guitar in her lap, her harp at her side, and her drawing table before her,—has suddenly felt himself awed into his best and most respectful breeding, when introduced to her retiring but self-possessed elder sister, dressed with an almost matronly simplicity, and evidently full, not of her own airs and graces, but of the modest and serious courtesy which beseemed her station as the youthful mistress of the house.

Dignity, a mild and gentle but still a most striking dignity, was the prime characteristic of Agnes Molesworth, in look and in mind. Her beauty was the beauty of sculpture, as contradistinguished from that of painting; depending mainly

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on form and expression, and little on colour. There could hardly be a stronger contrast than existed between the marble purity of her finely-grained complexion, the softness of her deep grey eye, the calm composure of her exquisitely moulded features, and the rosy cheeks, the brilliant glances, and the playful animation of Jessy. In a word, Jessy was a pretty girl, and Agnes was a beautiful woman. Of these several facts both sisters were, of course, perfectly aware; Jessy, because every body told her so, and she must have been deaf to have escaped the knowledge; Agnes, from some process equally certain, but less direct; for few would have ventured to take the liberty of addressing a personal compliment to one evidently too proud to find pleasure in any thing so nearly resembling flattery as praise.

Few, excepting her looking-glass and her father, had ever told Agnes that she was handsome, and yet she was as conscious of her surpassing beauty as Jessy of her sparkling prettiness; and, perhaps, as a mere question of appearance and becomingness, there might have been as much coquetry in the severe simplicity of attire and of manner which distinguished one sister, as in the elaborate adornment and innocent show-off of the other. There was, however, between them, exactly such a real and internal difference of taste and of character as the outward show served to indicate. Both were true, gentle, good, and kind; but the elder was as much loftier in mind as in stature, was full of high pursuit and noble purpose; had abandoned drawing, from feeling herself dissatisfied with her own performances, as compared with the works of real artists; reserved her musical talent entirely for her domestic circle, because she put too much of soul into that delicious art to make it a mere amusement; and was only saved from becoming a poetess, by her almost exclusive devotion to the very great in poetry — to Wordsworth, to Milton, and to Shakspeare. These tastes she very wisely kept to herself; but they gave a higher and firmer tone to her character and

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manners; and more than one peer, when seated at Mr. Molesworth's hospitable table, has thought within himself how well his beautiful daughter would become a coronet.

Marriage, however, seemed little in her thoughts. Once or twice, indeed, her kind father had pressed on her the brilliant establishments that had offered,—but her sweet questions, "Are you tired of me? Do you wish me away?" had always gone straight to his heart, and had put aside for the moment the ambition of his nature even for this his favourite child.

Of Jessy, with all her youthful attraction, he had always been less proud, perhaps less fond. Besides, her destiny he had long in his own mind considered as decided. Charles Woodford, a poor relation, brought up by his kindness, and recently returned into his family from a great office in London, was the person on whom he had long ago fixed for the husband of his youngest daughter, and for the immediate partner and eventual successor to his great and flourishing business:—a choice that seemed fully justified by the excellent conduct and remarkable talents of his orphan cousin, and by the apparently good understanding and mutual affection that subsisted between the young people.

This arrangement was the more agreeable to him, as, providing munificently for Jessy, it allowed him the privilege of making, as in lawyer-phrase he used to boast, "an elder son" of Agnes, who would, by this marriage of her younger sister, become one of the richest heiresses of the county. He had even, in his own mind, elected her future spouse, in the person of a young baronet who had lately been much at the house, and in favour of whose expected addresses (for the proposal had not yet been made—the gentleman had gone no further than attentions) he had determined to exert the paternal authority which had so long lain dormant.

But in the affairs of love, as in all others, man is born to disappointment. "*L'homme propose, et Dieu dispose,*" is

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never truer than in the great matter of matrimony. So found poor Mr. Molesworth, who—Jessy having arrived at the age of eighteen, and Charles at that of two-and-twenty—offered his pretty daughter and the lucrative partnership to his penny-less relation, and was petrified with astonishment and indignation to find the connexion very respectfully but very firmly declined. The young man was much distressed and agitated; "he had the highest respect for Miss Jessy; but he could not marry her—he loved another!" And then he poured forth a confidence as unexpected as it was undesired by his incensed patron, who left him in undiminished wrath and increased perplexity.

This interview had taken place immediately after breakfast; and when the conference was ended, the provoked father sought his daughters, who, happily unconscious of all that had occurred, were amusing themselves in their splendid conservatory—a scene always as becoming as it is agreeable to youth and beauty. Jessy was flitting about like a butterfly amongst the fragrant orange trees and the bright geraniums; Agnes standing under a superb fuschia that hung over a large marble basin, her form and attitude, her white dress, and the classical arrangement of her dark hair, giving her the look of some nymph or naiad, a rare relic of Grecian art. Jessy was prattling gaily, as she wandered about, of a concert which they had attended the evening before at the county town:—

"I hate concerts!" said the pretty little flirt. "To sit bolt upright on a hard bench for four hours, between the same four people, without the possibility of moving, or of speaking to any body, or of any body's getting to us! Oh! how tiresome it is!"

"I saw Sir Edmund trying to slide through the crowd to reach you," said Agnes, a little archly: "his presence would, perhaps, have mitigated the evil. But the barricade was too complete; he was forced to retreat, without accomplishing his object."

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"Yes, I assure you, he thought it very tiresome; he told me so when we were coming out. And then the music!" pursued Jessy; "the noise that they call music! Sir Edmund says that he likes no music except my guitar, or a flute on the water; and I like none except your playing on the organ, and singing Handel on a Sunday evening, or Charles Woodford's reading Milton and bits of Hamlet."

"Do you call that music?" asked Agnes, laughing. "And yet," continued she, "it is most truly so, with his rich Pasta-like voice, and his fine sense of sound; and to you, who do not greatly love poetry for its own sake, it is, doubtless, a pleasure much resembling in kind that of hearing the most thrilling of melodies on the noblest of instruments. I myself have felt such a gratification in hearing that voice recite the verses of Homer or of Sophocles in the original Greek. Charles Woodford's reading *is* music."

"It is a music which you are neither of you likely to hear again," interrupted Mr. Molesworth, advancing suddenly towards them; "for he has been ungrateful, and I have discarded him."

Agnes stood as if petrified: "Ungrateful! oh, father!"

"You can't have discarded him, to be sure, papa," said Jessy, always good-natured; "poor Charles! what can he have done?"

"Refused your hand, child," said the angry parent; "refused to be my partner and son-in-law, and fallen in love with another lady! What have you to say for him now?"

"Why really, papa," replied Jessy, "I'm much more obliged to him for refusing my hand than to you for offering it. I like Charles very well for a cousin, but I should not like such a husband at all; so that if this refusal be the worst that has happened, there's no great harm done." And off the gipsy ran; declaring that "she must put on her habit, for she had promised to ride with Sir Edmund and his sister, and expected them every minute."

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The father and his favourite daughter remained in the conservatory.

"That heart is untouched, however," said Mr. Molesworth, looking after her with a smile.

"Untouched by Charles Woodford, undoubtedly," replied Agnes, "but has he really refused my sister?"

"Absolutely."

"And does he love another?"

"He says so, and I believe him."

"Is he loved again?"

"That he did not say."

"Did he tell you the name of the lady?"

"Yes."

"Do you know her?"

"Yes."

"Is she worthy of him?"

"Most worthy."

"Has he any hope of gaining her affections? Oh! he **must**! he must! What woman could refuse him?"

"He is determined not to try. The lady whom he loves is above him in every way; and much as he has counteracted my wishes, it is an honourable part of Charles Woodford's conduct, that he intends to leave his affection unsuspected by its object."

Here ensued a short pause in the dialogue, during which Agnes appeared trying to occupy herself with collecting the blossoms of a Cape jessamine, and watering a favourite geranium; but it would not do: the subject was at her heart, and she could not force her mind to indifferent occupations. She returned to her father, who had been anxiously watching her motions, and the varying expression of her countenance, and resumed the conversation.

"Father! perhaps it is hardly maidenly to avow so much, but although you have never in set words told me your intentions, I have yet seen and known, I can hardly tell how, all that your kind partiality towards me has designed for your

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children. You have mistaken me, dearest father, doubly mistaken me; first, in thinking me fit to fill a splendid place in society; next, in imagining that I desired such splendour. You meant to give Jessy and the lucrative partnership to Charles Woodford, and designed me and your large possessions for our wealthy and titled neighbour. And with some little change of persons these arrangements may still, for the most part, hold good. Sir Edmund may still be your son-in-law and your heir, for he loves Jessy, and Jessy loves him. Charles Woodford may still be your partner and your adopted son, for nothing has chanced that need diminish your affection or his merit. Marry him to the woman he loves. She must be ambitious indeed, if she be not content with such destiny. And let me live on with you, dear father, single and unwedded, with no thought but to contribute to your comfort, to cheer and brighten your declining years. Do not let your too great fondness for me stand in the way of their happiness! Make me not so odious to them and to myself, dear father! Let me live always with you, and for you—always your own poor Agnes!" And, blushing at the earnestness with which she had spoken, she bent her head over the marble basin, whose waters reflected the fair image, as if she had really been the Grecian statue, to which, whilst he listened, her fond father's fancy had compared her: "Let me live single with you, and marry Charles to the woman whom he loves."

"Have you heard the name of the lady in question? Have you formed any guess who she may be?"

"Not the slightest. I imagined from what you said, that she was a stranger to me. Have I ever seen her?"

"You may see her—at least you may see her reflection in the water at this very moment; for he has had the infinite presumption, the admirable good taste, to fall in love with his cousin Agnes!"

"Father!"

"And now, mine own sweetest! do you still wish to live single with me?"

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"Oh, father! father!"

"Or do you desire that I should marry Charles to the woman of his heart?"

"Father! dear father!"

"Choose, my Agnes! It shall be as you command. Speak freely. Do not cling so around me, but speak!"

"Oh, my dear father! Cannot we all live together? I cannot leave you. But poor Charles—surely, father, we may all live together!"

And so it was settled: and a very few months proved that love had contrived better for Mr. Molesworth than he had done for himself. Jessy, with her prettiness, and her title, and her fopperies, was the very thing to be vain of—the very thing to visit for a day;—but Agnes and the cousin, whose noble character and splendid talents so well deserved her, made the pride and the happiness of his home.

THE LOST KEYS,

OR A DAY OF DISTRESS.

It was a glorious June morning; and I got up gay and bright, as the Americans say, to breakfast in the pretty sum-

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mer-room overlooking the garden, which, built partly for my accommodation and partly for that of my geraniums, who make it their winter residence, is as regularly called the green-house as if I and my several properties—sofas, chairs, tables, chiffonières, and ottomans—did not inhabit it during the whole of the fine season; as if it were not in its own person a well-proportioned and spacious apartment, no otherways to be distinguished from common drawing-rooms than by being nearly fronted with glass, about which out-of-door myrtles, passion-flowers, clematis, and the Persian honeysuckle, form a most graceful and varied frame-work, not unlike the festoons of flowers and foliage which one sees round some of the scarce and high-priced tradesmen's cards, and ridotto tickets of Hogarth and Bartolozzi. Large glass folding-doors open into the little garden, almost surrounded by old buildings of the most picturesque form—the buildings themselves partly hidden by clustering vines, and my superb bay-tree, its shining leaves glittering in the sun on one side, whilst a tall pear-tree, garlanded to the very top with an English honeysuckle in full flower, breaks the horizontal line of the low cottage-roof on the other; the very pear-tree being, in its own turn, half concealed by a splendid pyramid of geraniums erected under its shade. Such geraniums! It does not become us poor mortals to be vain—but really, my geraniums! There is certainly nothing but the garden into which Aladdin found his way, and where the fruit was composed of gems, that can compare with them. This pyramid is undoubtedly the great object from the green-house; but the common flower-beds which surround it, filled with roses of all sorts, and lilies of all colours, and pinks of all patterns, and campanulas of all shapes, to say nothing of the innumerable tribes of annuals, of all the outlandish names that ever were invented, are not to be despised even beside the gorgeous exotics, which, arranged with the nicest attention to colour and form, so as to combine the mingled charms of harmony and contrast, seem to look down proudly on their humble compeers.

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No pleasanter place for a summer breakfast—always a pretty thing, with its cherries, and strawberries, and its affluence of nosegays and posies—no pleasanter place for a summer breakfast-table than my green-house! And no pleasanter companion, with whom to enjoy it, than the fair friend, as bright as a rose-bud, and as gay as a lark—the saucy, merry, charming Kate, who was waiting to partake our country fare. The birds were singing in the branches; bees, and butterflies, and myriads of gay happy insects were flitting about in the flower-beds; the haymakers were crowding to their light and lively labour in a neighbouring meadow; whilst the pleasant smell of the newly-mown grass was blended with that of a bean-field in full blossom still nearer, and with the thousand odours of the garden—so that sight, and sound, and smell were a rare compound of all that is delightful to the sense and the feeling.

Nor were higher pleasures wanting. My pretty friend, with all her vivacity, had a keen relish of what is finest in literature and in poetry. An old folio edition of that volume of Dryden called his "Fables," which contains the glorious rifacimenti of parts of Chaucer, and the best of his original poems, happened to be on the table; the fine description of Spring in the opening of the Flower and the Leaf, led to the picture of Eden in the Paradise Lost, and that again to Comus, and Comus to Fletcher's Faithful Shepherdess, and Fletcher's Faithful Shepherdess to Shakspeare, and As You Like It. The bees and the butterflies, culling for pleasure or for thrift the sweets of my geraniums, were but types of Kate Leslie and myself roving amidst the poets. This does not sound much like a day of distress; but the evil is to come.

A gentle sorrow did arrive, all too soon, in the shape of Kate Leslie's poney-phaeton, which whisked off that charming person as fast as her two long-tailed Arabians could put their feet to the ground. This evil had, however, substantial consolation in the promise of another visit very soon; and I re-

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sumed, in peace and quietness, the usual round of idle occupation which forms the morning employment of a country gentlewoman of small fortune: ordered dinner—minced veal, cold ham, a currant-pudding, and a salad—if any body happens to be curious on the score of my housekeeping; renewed my beau-pots; watered such of my plants as wanted most; mended my gloves; patted Dash; looked at the Times; and was just sitting down to work, or to pretend to work, when I was most pleasantly interrupted by the arrival of some morning visitors—friends from a distance—for whom, after a hearty welcome and some cordial chat, I ordered luncheon, with which order my miseries began.

"The keys, if you please, ma'am, for the wine and the Kennet ale," said Anne, my female factotum, who rules, as regent, not only the cook, and the under-maid, and the boy, but the whole family, myself included, and is an actual housekeeper in every respect except that of keeping the keys. "The keys, ma'am, if you please," said Anne; and then I found that my keys were not in my right-hand pocket, where they ought to have been, nor in my left-hand pocket, where they might have been, nor in either of my apron-pockets, nor in my work-basket, nor in my reticule—in short, that my keys were lost!

Now these keys were only two in number, and small enough in dimensions; but then the one opened that important part of me, my writing-desk; and the other contained within itself the specific power over every lock in the house, being no other than the key of the key-drawer; and no chance of picking them—for alas! alas! the locks were Bramah's! So, after a few exclamations, such as, What can have become of my keys? Has any one seen my keys? Somebody must have run away with my keys!—I recollected that, however consolatory to myself such lamentations might be, they would by no means tend to quench the thirst of my guests. I applied myself vigorously to remedy the evil all I could by applications to my nearest neighbours (for time was pressing, and our horse and his

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master out for the day) to supply, as well as might be, my deficiency. Accordingly I sent to the public-house for their best beer, which, not being Kennet ale, would not go down; and to the good-humoured wives of the shoemaker and the baker for their best wine. Fancy to yourselves a decanter of damson wine arriving from one quarter, and a jug of parsnip wine, fresh from the wood, tapped on purpose, from the other! And this for drinkers of Burgundy and Champagne! Luckily the water was good, and my visitors were good-natured, and comforted me in my affliction, and made a jest of the matter. Really they are a nice family, the Sumners, especially the two young men, to whom I have, they say, taught the taste of spring-water.

This trouble passed over lightly enough. But scarcely were they gone before the tax-gatherer came for money—locked up in my desk! What will the collector say?—And the justice's clerk for warrants, left under my care by the chairman of the bench, and also safely lodged in the same safe repository. What will their worships say to this delinquency? It will be fortunate if they do not issue a warrant against me in my own person! My very purse was left by accident in that unlucky writing-desk; and when our kind neighbours, the Wrights, sent a melon, and I was forced to borrow a shilling to give the messenger, I could bear my loss no longer, and determined to institute a strict search on the instant.

But before the search could begin in came the pretty little roly-poly Sydneys and Murrays, brats from seven downwards, with their whole train of nurses, and nursery-maids, and nursery-governesses, by invitation, to eat strawberries, and the strawberries were locked up in a cupboard, the key of which was in the unopenable drawer! And good farmer Brookes, he too called, sent by his honour for a bottle of Hollands—the right Schiedam: and the Schiedam was in the cellar; and the key of the cellar was in the Bramah-locked drawer! And

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the worthy farmer, who behaved charmingly for a man deprived of his gin, was fain to be content with excuses, like a voter after an election; and the poor children were compelled to put up with promises, like a voter before one; to be sure, they had a few pinks and roses to sweeten their disappointment; but the strawberries were as uncomeatable as the Schiedam.

At last they were gone; and then began the search in good earnest. Every drawer, not locked, every room that could be entered, every box that could be opened, was ransacked over and over again for these intolerable keys.

All my goods and chattels were flung together in heaps, and then picked over, (a process which would make even new things seem disjointed and shabby,) and the quantities of trumpery thereby disclosed, especially in the shape of thimbles, needle-cases, pincushions, and scissars, from the different work-baskets, work-boxes, and work-bags, (your idle person always abounds in working materials,) were astounding. I think there were seventeen pincushions of different patterns —beginning with an old boot and ending with a new guitar. But what was there not? It seemed to me that there were pocketable commodities enough to furnish a second-hand bazaar! Every thing was there except my keys.

For four hours did I and my luckless maidens perambulate the house, whilst John, the boy, examined the garden; until we were all so tired that we were forced to sit down from mere weariness. Saving always the first night of one of my tragedies, when, though I pique myself on being composed, I can never manage to sit still; except on such an occasion, I do not think I ever walked so much at one time in my life. At last I flung myself on a sofa in the green-house, and began to revolve the possibility of their being still in the place where I had first missed them.

A jingle in my apron-pocket afforded some hope, but it turned out to be only the clinking of a pair of garden-scissars

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against his old companion, a silver pencil-case—and that prospect faded away. A slight opening in Dryden's heavily-bound volume gave another glimmer of sunshine, but it proved to be occasioned by a sprig of myrtle in Palamon and Arcite—Kate Leslie's elegant mark.

This circumstance recalled the recollection of my pretty friend. Could she have been the culprit? And I began to ponder over all the instances of unconscious key-stealing that I had heard of amongst my acquaintance. How my old friend, Aunt Martha, had been so well known for that propensity as to be regularly sought after whenever keys were missing; and my young friend, Edward Harley, from the habit of twisting something round his fingers during his eloquent talk (people used to provide another eloquent talker, Madame de Staël, with a willow-twig for the purpose,) had once caught up and carried away a key, also a Bramah, belonging to a lawyer's bureau, thereby, as the lawyer affirmed, causing the loss of divers lawsuits to himself and his clients. Neither Aunt Martha nor Edward had been near the place; but Kate Leslie might be equally subject to absent fits, and might, in a paroxysm, have abstracted my keys; at all events it was worth trying. So I wrote her a note to go by post in the evening (for Kate, I grieve to say, lives above twenty miles off) and determined to await her reply, and think no more of my calamity.

A wise resolution! but, like many other wise resolves, easier made than kept. Even if I could have forgotten my loss, my own household would not have let me.

The cook, with professional callousness, came to demand sugar for the currant-pudding—and the sugar was in the store-room—and the store-room was locked; and scarcely had I recovered from this shock before Anne came to inform me that there was no oil in the cruet, and that the flask was in the cellar, snugly reposing, I suppose, by the side of the Schiedam, so that if for weariness I could have eaten, there was no dinner to eat—for without the salad who would might take the meat!

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However, I being alone, this signified little; much less than a circumstance of which I was reminded by my note to Kate Leslie, namely, that in my desk were two important letters, one triple, and franked for that very night; as well as a corrected proof-sheet, for which the press was waiting; and that all these despatches were to be sent off by post that evening.

Roused by this extremity, I carried my troubles and my writing-desk to my good friend the blacksmith—a civil intelligent man, who sympathized with my distress, sighed, shook his head, and uttered the word Bramah!—and I thought my perplexity was nearly at its height, when, as I was wending slowly homeward, my sorrows were brought to a climax by my being overtaken by one of the friends whom I admire and honour most in the world—a person whom all the world admires—who told me, in her prettiest way, that she was glad to see me so near my own gate, for that she was coming to drink tea with me.

Here was a calamity! The Lady Mary H., a professed tea-drinker—a green-tea-drinker, one (it was a point of sympathy between us) who took nothing but tea and water, and, therefore, required that gentle and lady-like stimulant in full perfection. Lady Mary come to drink tea with me; and I with nothing better to offer her than tea from the shop—the village-shop—bohea, or souchong, or whatever they might call the vile mixture. Tea from the shop for Lady Mary! Ill luck could go no further: it was the very extremity of small distress.

Her ladyship is, however, as kind as she is charming, and bore our mutual misfortune with great fortitude; admired my garden, praised my geraniums, and tried to make me forget my calamity. Her kindness was thrown away. I could not even laugh at myself, or find beauty in my flowers, or be pleased with her for flattering them. I tried, however, to do the honours by my plants; and, in placing a large night-scented stock, which was just beginning to emit its odour,

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upon the table, I struck against the edge, and found something hard under my belt.

"My keys! my keys!" cried I, untying the riband, and half laughing with delight, as I heard a most pleasant jingle on the floor; and the lost keys, sure enough, they were; deposited there, of course, by my own hand; unfelt, unseen, and unsuspected, during our long and weary search. Since the adventure of my dear friend, Mrs. S., who hunted a whole morning for her spectacles whilst they were comfortably perched upon her nose, I have met with nothing so silly and so perplexing.

But my troubles were over—my affliction was at an end.

The strawberries were sent to the dear little girls; and the Schiedam to the good farmer; and the warrants to the clerk. The tax-gatherer called for his money; letters and proof went to the post; and never in my life did I enjoy a cup of Twining's green tea so much as the one which Lady Mary and I took together after my day of distress.

THE RESIDUARY LEGATEE.

A TRUE STORY.

ABOVE half a century ago—for to such a date does my little story refer—Red Lion Square was accounted a genteel, if not a fashionable, place of residence, and numbered amongst its inhabitants some of the principal London attorneys—solicitor was not the phrase in those days—to whom its vicinity to the inns of court rendered that neighbourhood particularly convenient. Amongst the most respectable of these respectable persons was Mr. Mordaunt, a widower with five children, whose mingled strength and kindliness of character rendered him the very man to educate and bring out his motherless

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family; just as the union of acuteness and integrity, for which he was distinguished in his professional life, had placed him deservedly at the head of one of the most flourishing firms in the metropolis. He was not rich, for he had begun the world with nothing but industry and talent, had married a lady in the same predicament with himself, and had preferred giving his children the inalienable possession of an excellent education to the accumulation of money for their immediate portions; but, in the prime of life, with an excellent income and still brighter prospects, he lived as became a man of liberal habits and elegant tastes; and generous, both from temper and principle, refused no indulgence to his family, except such as appeared to him inconsistent with their station, or with that wise and liberal economy which is as essential, perhaps even more so, to the affluent as to the poor.

The young people were all of high promise. The eldest, Frank, a youth of extraordinary ability, bringing up to the bar, was on the point of leaving Oxford, where he had distinguished himself greatly, and had recently been entered at the Temple. William, the second son, was in his father's office: and of the three daughters, Catherine, the elder, a girl of eighteen, was eminently pretty; Sarah, two years younger, and less handsome, had something of her brother Frank's talent; and little Barbara, the pet and plaything of the whole house, was that charming creature—a lively and good-humoured spoilt child.

One evening, in the beginning of July, this amiable family were assembled in their pretty drawing-room, fresh hung with India paper, where gorgeous birds were perched amongst gorgeous flowers, and Chinese processions, gorgeous and immovable as the flowers or the birds, stuck amidst gay pagodas and gilded temples—a bright but unmeaning pageant. The furniture consisted of high-bottomed French chairs and settees covered with blue damask, at once handsome and uncomfortable, with window-curtains to match; a japan cabinet; a

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mahogany bureau, of which the top formed a small bookcase with glass doors; a harpsichord—for pianos were not yet in use; two large looking-glasses between the windows, and marble tables with gilt legs underneath them; a Pembroke table in the middle of the room, and a large fire-screen, with a stupendous bunch of flowers in embroidery, the elaborate work of the fair Catherine, in one corner.

Mr. Mordaunt was writing a letter at one table; his eldest daughter working, or, to use her brother's phrase, flourishing, an apron at another; the young men were lounging at the windows; and Bab (for the dignity of that aristocratic name, so often seen in the peerage, and so seldom elsewhere, was in this young lady's case sadly pretermitted—the very housemaid who dressed her called her Miss Bab) was playing with her doll on the floor.

Sarah's employment was different from the rest. She was standing at the harpsichord, busied in arranging, in China vases, a quantity of flowers with which it was strewed, and which had just arrived from a small country-house, which Mr. Mordaunt called his farm, on Enfield Chase. With intuitive taste Sarah had put the honeysuckles, so pretty by themselves and which mix so ill with gayer flowers, in a large jar on the centre of the mantle-piece, flanking it with a smaller pot filled with white Provence roses—so elegant and delicate amongst their own green leaves—on one side, and another pot of that rose called the maiden's blush on the side opposite; whilst the rest of the old-fashioned bouquet, pinks, lilies, larkspurs, sweet-williams, and sweet-peas, she gathered together in a large China bowl, and deposited on the harpsichord between a pile of music-books and a guitar-case.

"How I wish these flowers had arrived before poor Mrs. Sullivan went away!" exclaimed Sarah, after standing before them for some minutes to survey and admire her own handywork. "She seemed so out of spirits—poor woman!—and some of these beautiful roses would have comforted her and

done her good; at least," added she, seeing her elder brother smile and shake his head, "I am sure they would always have cheered me, let me be as melancholy as I might; and she is as fond of flowers as I am, and was always used to them in her father's fine garden."

"Kindness must always do good under any form, my dear Sarah," observed her father, looking up from his letter; "but I fear that poor Mrs. Sullivan's depression is too deeply seated to be touched by your pretty remedy, and that any thing which reminds her of her father's house is more likely to increase than to remove her dejection."

"Mr. Darrell, then, continues implacable?" inquired Frank, with much interest.

"Yes," replied Mr. Mordaunt, "and I fear will remain so. I am writing to him now in his daughter's behalf, but I have no hope of any good result. He sent for my partner yesterday to make his will, evidently to avoid my importunity in favour of these poor Sullivans. Her elopement was a most foolish act—a wrong, as well as foolish act; but ten years of penitence and suffering might have softened my old friend towards his only child, and one who, spoilt by his indulgence and her own position in society—a beauty and an heiress—can so ill support the penury and neglect under which she now languishes."

"Was she beautiful?" asked Catherine: "I see no remains of former loveliness."

"She is much changed," answered Frank; "but even I can remember her a most splendid woman. She had the presence and air of a queen, or rather of a young lady's notion of a queen. Fancy a stately and magnificent creature, with high features; a dark, clear, colourless complexion; a proud, curling lip; large black eyes—sometimes soft and languishing, but which could light up with a fire as bright as the glow of a furnace; a broad, smooth forehead; a dark, flexible brow; and a smile exquisitely sweet, and you will have some idea of

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Sophia Darrell before her imprudent and unfortunate marriage. Poverty and her father's displeasure have wrought this change, and perhaps her husband's death."

"Chiefly want of money," observed Mr. Mordaunt, sealing and directing his letter. "She had pretty well got over the loss of Captain Sullivan. Want of money is the pressing evil."

"I wish I were as rich as Mr. Darrell!" cried Sarah; and then she blushed and stopped, adding, in a hesitating voice, "what a pity it is that good wishes can do no real good!"

"Except to the wisher, Sarah," replied her father: "the slightest emotion of disinterested kindness that passes through the mind improves and refreshes that mind, producing generous thought and noble feeling, as the sun and rain foster your favourite flowers. Cherish kind wishes, my children; for a time may come when you may be enabled to put them in practice. In the mean while," added he, in a gayer tone, "tell me if you were all very rich, what you would wish for yourselves—for your own gratification, ladies and gentlemen?"

"Oh, papa," exclaimed Sarah, "a great library!"

"And I," said Miss Bab, from the floor, "I'd have a great doll."

"I'd go to Italy," said Frank.

"I to Oxford," cried his brother.

"And I to Ranelagh," said Catherine, laughing. "In the mean time," added she, as the footman—it being now six o'clock, for they had dined at the then usual hour of three—brought in the tea equipage, followed by the silver kettle and lamp—"In the mean time, we may as well go to tea, and afterwards take a walk in Gray's Inn Garden as we meant to do, for the evening is beautiful, and my new hat is just come home."

About two months after, the same party, with the exception of Mr. Mordaunt, were assembled at nearly the same hour in a very different scene. They were then passing the long vacation at the farm, and, it being Bab's birthday, had adjourned

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to the root-house, a pretty rustic building at the end of the garden, to partake of fruit, and cakes, and a syllabub from the cow, which the enchanted little girl had been permitted to compound herself, under the direction and superintendence of the housekeeper. It was a scene beautiful in itself, and full of youthful enjoyment. The somewhat sombre root-house, with its Gothic painted windows, its projecting thatch, supported by rough pillars clothed with ivy, clematis, passion-flowers, and the virgin-in-the-bower, looked out on a garden, gay with hollyhocks, balsams, China-asters, African marigolds, the rich scarlet geranium, and the sweet marvel of Peru. The evening sun gleamed brightly around, shining on the old farm-house, whose casement windows peeped, through a clustering vine, on a small piece of water at the end of the garden, and the green common and forest beyond, with an effect of light and shadow, just, as Sarah observed, "like a real picture;" and the figures scattered about would have pleased a painter's eye almost as well as the landscape in which they were placed.

Catherine, radiant with innocent gaiety, blooming as Hebe, and airy as a sylph, stood catching, in a wicker basket, the large bunches of grapes which her younger brother, with one foot on a ladder, and one on the steep roof of the house, threw down to her and Frank, who was at once steadying the ladder and directing the steps of the adventurous gatherer. Little Bab, the heroine of the day, was marching in great state down a broad gravel walk, leading from the house to the root-house, preceding a procession consisting of John, the footman, with a tray of jingling spoons and glasses—the house-keeper, bearing the famous syllabub, her own syllabub—and the housemaid, well laden with fruit and cakes. Sarah, faithful to her flowers, was collecting an autumn nosegay—cloves, jessamine, blossomed myrtle, mignionette, and the late musk-rose—partly as an offering to Miss Barbara—partly for her father, whose return from town, whither he had been summoned on business, was anxiously expected by them all.

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Just as the young people were collected together in the root-house, Mr. Mordaunt arrived. He was in deep mourning, and although receiving with kindness Sarah's offering of flowers, and Bab's bustling presentation of a glass of syllabub, which the little lady of the day insisted on filling herself, was evidently serious, preoccupied, almost agitated. He sat down without speaking, throwing his hat upon the table, and pushing away Catherine's guitar, which had been brought thither purposely to amuse him. He had even forgotten that it was poor Bab's birthday, until reminded of it by the child herself, who clambered upon his knees, put her arms round his neck, and demanded clamorously that her dear papa should kiss her and wish her joy. He then kissed her tenderly, uttered a fervent benediction on her, and on all his children, and relapsed into his former silence and abstraction.

At length he said, "My sadness saddens you, my dear boys and girls, but I am just come from a very solemn scene, from Mr. Darrell's funeral."

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Frank, with much emotion. "I did not even know that he was dead."

"Nor I, till I reached London yesterday," returned Mr. Mordaunt.

"Poor Mrs. Sullivan!" cried Sarah: "did her father forgive her before he died?"

"He sent her his forgiveness on his death-bed—an unspeakable comfort!—but still his angry will remains unrevoked. She and her children are starving, whilst his immense fortune descends to one unconnected with him by blood or alliance, or any tie save that of an old friendship. After a few trifling bequests to friends and servants, I am left residuary legatee. The property is large, my children; larger, perhaps, than with your moderate views and limited expectations you can readily apprehend. You may be rich, even beyond the utmost grasp of your wishes, and Catherine may revel in innocent amusement, and Frank in tasteful travel;

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college with all its advantages is open to his brother; Sarah may have endless books, and Barbara countless dolls; luxury, splendour, gaiety, and ambition, are before ye—the trappings of grandeur or the delights of lettered ease; ye may be rich, my children, beyond the dreams of avarice—or ye may resign these riches to the natural heir, and return to peaceful competence and honourable exertion, reaping no other fruit from this unsought-for legacy than a spotless reputation and a clear conscience. Choose, and choose freely. My little Sarah has, I think, already chosen. When, some weeks ago, she wished to be as rich as Mr. Darrell, I read her countenance ill, if the motive of that wish were not to enrich Mrs. Sullivan. Choose, my dear children, and choose freely!"

"Oh, my dear father, we have chosen! Could you think that we should hesitate? I answer for my brothers and sisters, as for myself. How could *your* children waver between wealth and honour?" And Frank, as he said this, threw himself into his father's arms, the other young people clinging round them—even little Bab exclaiming, "Oh, dear papa, the money must *be all* for Mrs. Sullivan!"

The relator of this true anecdote had the gratification of hearing it from one of the actors in the scene—the Sarah of her little story, who is now in a green old age, the delight of her friends, and the admiration of her acquaintances. Her readers will probably be as glad to hear as she was, that the family, thus honourably self-deprived of enormous riches, has been eminently happy and prosperous in all its branches—that the firm distinguished by the virtues of its founder still continues one of the first in London—and that a grandson of Mr. Mordaunt's, no less remarkable for talent and integrity than his progenitor, is at the present time a partner in the house.

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THE RUNAWAY.

One of the most retired-looking spots in our thickly-peopled neighbourhood, is the pretty little nook called Sandleford Green; a small, very small patch of green sward, formed by a casual receding of the fields at a place where two narrow shady lanes cross each other, leaving just room enough in one angle for a clear mirror-like pond, with glorious old thorns dipping into it from the surrounding hedges, whilst a village pond, enclosing a noble oak, occupies another corner, and a third is completely overshadowed by two large horse-chesnut trees standing like sentinels on either side of a gate, which leads through a short, deep lane to the only dwelling within sight or hearing. No spot is, apparently, so entirely out of the way and out of the world, as Sandleford Green! And yet the well-beaten footpaths, two or three of which striking in different directions across the fields met in this spot as a common centre, intimated that the little Green was a place of some resort, as indeed it actually was, not so much as a thoroughfare, but from its own independent attraction. The one solitary and unostentatious tenement of which it boasted, being famous all through the county for its home-brewed ale; the fine Sandleford beer, most emphatically called strong, holding so high a rank amongst the consumers of that formidable beverage, that people sent for it far and near; and the liveried grooms of two or three neighbouring squires might often be seen galloping on their thoroughbred hunters to seek this only liquor worthy to wash down their masters' Stilton, at the same moment that poor Dame Wheeler's little girl was crossing the stile for her sick grandmother's daily half-pint; whilst half the rustics in the parish were pouring in from north, south, east, and west, to enjoy in Joseph Dobson's own tap-room, or beneath his

honeysuckled porch, their own less moderate potations. "First come first served," was Joseph's motto, and although our rural Boniface was on the whole a man of impartiality, it is doubtful whether he had not some pleasure in keeping the lacqueys in attendance, and the grandees whom they served in expectation, whilst he administered to the wants of his humbler and more sociable customers. A chuckling, bustling, merry knave was our landlord, and a freespoken; had a vote for the county, which he regularly bestowed on the opposition candidate, be the ministers whom they might (Joseph thought no honest man could ever vote for any ministry, that was his creed); owed no one a shilling; and was too confident in the power of his ale to have any dread of the magistrates and the License Act:—"Old Sir Thomas can't finish his dinner without a glass of my beer," thought Joseph; "and I may be as saucy and independent as I please."

Whatever might be the merits of the Sandleford ale, of which I confess myself nowise qualified to judge, holding beer in all its varieties as an abomination even more flagrant than the other detestable drinkable called wine,—whatever might be the charms of Joseph's beverage, there could be no question as to the beauty and picturesqueness of his habitation.

It was a high, narrow, tower-like house, with chimneys like turrets, and every sort of gable-end and inequality of which a building is capable, harmonized and enriched by an old vine, which, after creeping up one side of the house, nearly covered the roof, garlanding the very chimneys, and wreathing its luxuriant abundance of leaf and fruit and tendril wherever a shoot could find place, until it fairly hung over on the other side—until its rich festoons nearly met the branchy honeysuckle, (Milton's "twisted eglantine,") which climbing up, shaded a rude, but fanciful and airy porch, such as is often seen in Wouwerman's pictures, adding grace and lightness even to them. Nor was the garden, which reached on one side to a small meandering brook, the large garden, full of

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beds of vegetables and berry bushes, almost hidden by wide flower borders, very nicely kept; or the long strip of beautiful green sward, the meadow, orchard, or pleasure ground, (for it might pass for either of these,) with its fine grove of old fruit trees, pear, plum, cherry, and apple, terminated by its smooth bowling green and goodly arbour, at all unworthy of the picturesque dwelling to which they were appended. The territory behind, a miniature farm-yard, with stabling for two, cart-room for one, a commodious cowshed, and pigsties, goose-houses, and hen-houses out of number, its populous duck pond, and its abundance of noises,—horses neighing, cows lowing, calves bleating, pigs grunting, geese gabbling, ducks quacking, cocks crowing, hens cackling, and doves cooing,—was also a lively, stirring scene, especially when animated by the presence of mine host, portly, sturdy, and comely, an excellent representative of his own brown stout, with twenty pigeons fluttering about him, (for Joseph, amongst other fancies, was a great pigeon fancier,) and two or three pet tumblers or fantails perched on his shoulder. In short, every thing about the place, from the two rosy smiling lasses, his daughters, down to the fat yard dog and sleek tabby cat, seemed emblems of rural plenty and English independence; meet appendages to the sign of the Foaming Tankard, which swung in creaking magnificence from a post in front of the dwelling.

By far the most interesting inmate, however, of this small village hostelry, was one, whose whole appearance formed the strongest possible contrast to the rest of that flourishing establishment. Mary Walker, the only child of the good landlord's only sister, was a tall thin young woman, with a pale, mild, serious countenance, great simplicity of dress and manner, and a general delicacy both of look and demeanour, belonging partly perhaps to ill health, but so much connected with a natural elegance of mind, that it hushed even her boisterous uncle, and his boisterous customers, into something like gentleness; just as the presence of a born gentlewoman

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might have done, if it were possible to fancy a born gentlewoman seated in the tap-room of the Foaming Tankard.

To say truth, the tap-room was a place that Mary seldom visited. The noise, the talking, the singing, the smell of tobacco, or even the odour of the famous Sandleford beer, would have kept her from that well-frequented resort of the thirsty souls of the village, even if the dread of encountering some of her many lovers (for Mary had as many suitors as Penelope) had not been sufficient to hinder her from putting her foot across the threshold.

The cause of Mary Walker's many conquests might be found, perhaps, (at least *she* certainly thought so,) in the circumstance of her being a rustic heiress, having just so many hundreds of pounds as made her a great match in her own degree; the cause of her being, at two-and-twenty, unwedded, and unlikely to wed, will take rather more telling, although the story be short enough, and common enough too.

Joseph Dobson had had a son, called William, as unlike his father as possible; a gay, lively, mercurial spirit, too quick, or, as his poor mother used to say, too clever to learn, too ready at many trades to stick steadily to one; and so full of varying schemes and changeful resources, that every body except that doting mother felt convinced, that in spite of William's acknowledged talent, his destiny would prove unprosperous.

The only chance for its being otherwise, lay in his strong affection for his fair cousin, Mary Walker. Her influence over him, especially after the death of his fond but misjudging mother, who had fostered his wild and expensive habits, by supplying him with money for their indulgence, formed the only counteraction to his natural and acquired unsteadiness of character. Even his father, although knowing him best and fearing him most, looked forward with some degree of hope to the period when he should be quietly married to Mary; and she herself, (how strange it is, that the mildest and most reflective woman should be so often carried off her feet

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by the giddiest wild-goose of a man!) she herself idolized him; overturned all the disinterested objections of her uncle and guardian, to risking her money and her happiness with so flighty a swain, and even laid aside much of her own timidity to hasten, as far as her natural modesty would permit, the proposed union.

On the very evening before the intended marriage, William, who, amongst his other caprices, was frequently subject to the fury of jealousy, was seized with a violent fit of that amiable passion, the object being no other than George Bailey, my Lord's gamekeeper, as good-natured a fellow as ever lived, and a constant visitor at the sign of the Foaming Tankard. He had brought two tame pheasants, a cock and a hen, as a present to Mary, who was known to be fond of pet poultry; "a wedding present," as he had whispered at parting, and Mary unluckily had admired the beauty of the birds.

"You like the birds for the sake of the giver, Mary," said William, chafed at the warmth with which George had shaken hands with her in the moment of departure, and the mingled blush and smile with which she had received his whispered farewell; "you are thinking of the master's good looks, of his gay plumage, and not of the birds."

"The master thinks little of me, or I of him. You are quite mistaken as to both of us," replied Mary.

"You admire the beauty of the donor," pursued William, pertinaciously; "you talk of the pheasants, but you are thinking of him."

"Not I, indeed!" exclaimed Mary.

"But you *are*, I say, madam," resumed William, with increasing violence. "George Bailey is the beau of the parish, as you are the belle. We all know that; and for my poor part, I think it a great pity that you should be separated."

"If *you* think so, William," said poor Mary, and then, unable to finish the sentence, burst into tears.

"Well, madam, if I think so—"

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"Then—oh William! William! how cruel this is, when you know that I love you, and nobody but you, in this wide world!"

"If I think so, madam, then—pray finish what you were going to say. There is nothing I hate so much as these sort of scenes."

"Then," said Mary, resuming her firmness, "we had better part."

"Certainly, madam, we had better part, I agree with you perfectly," said the intended bridegroom, walking out of the house without listening to the threats of his father, the remonstrances of his sisters, or even the gentle assurances of Mary herself, that neither George Bailey nor she had ever thought of each other.

Joseph Dobson stormed, his little daughters fretted and wondered, and poor Mary cried; but all fully expected that that night at supper time, or at latest by peep of dawn, William would re-appear, repent, and be forgiven; for his temper, "which carried anger as the flint doth fire," had the redeeming grace of being eminently sweet and sunshiny, especially after one of these sudden storms; so that Mary, after feeling the exceeding delight of reconciliation, used sometimes to wonder whether she should like William as well, if he were always quiet and civil like other people. Mary cried, expecting to be comforted; but the comforter whom she expected did not arrive. The evening passed away—the night—the next morning, that which should have been the bridal morning!—the day—the intended wedding day! and still no tidings of William. His father traced him to London; and then came a report that he was gone on board ship; he had had such a fancy in his boyhood engendered by reading Robinson Crusoe; and then came rumours of shipwreck, at first doubtfully listened to, but gradually believed, as month after month and year after year glided by without any tidings arriving of the unhappy fugitive. Surely if he had been alive

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he would have written, was the secret thought and feeling of all.

In his own home, long absence had produced its usual effect, and things had returned to their ordinary course with little reference to the life or death of the young man. His father, first immoderately angry, then intemperately grieved, had resumed his former jovial temper and bustling habits; his light-hearted sisters had ceased to hope or fear, or lament; and his old companions had well nigh forgotten that he had ever existed. Forgotten, indeed, he was by every body except poor Mary, who cherished his memory with the gentle sadness of a young widow, and turned from love and lovers with the fond fidelity of a turtle dove that has lost its mate. Never was heart more devoted and true: as Ben Brown, the fat exciseman, and Aaron Keep, the lean shoemaker, and tall Jem Ward, the blacksmith, and little Bob Wheatley, the carpenter, besides at least a score more of rejected suitors, could testify, —George Bailey being nearly the only young man in the parish who had never made Mary Walker an offer, having, within three months of the pheasant present, brought home a very sufficient reason for not doing so in the shape of an exceedingly pretty black-eyed wife. Poor Mary! she would have done wisely in following the example of the rest of the world, and forgetting William Dobson; but, as she used to say, when urged on the subject, she could not.

Meanwhile, time rolled on, and it was now some years since any thing had been heard of him. May was drawing towards its close—that loveliest month, which joins the spring flowers with the summer leaves. The country was in its prime of beauty, and Sandleford Green, with its pearly bunches of hawthorn overhanging and reflected in the clear bright pond, the horse chesnuts covered with their pyramidal flowers, the golden broom skirting round the meadows where the young lambs were at play, the orchard one glow of blossom, the lilacs and laburnums scenting the arbour, and the honeysuckle

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perfuming the porch.—Sandleford was the sweetest and prettiest of all country places; and Mary was standing under the honeysuckle, looking at the blue sky, and the green grass, and the flowery fruit trees so gay in the sunshine, and thinking how wrong it was in her not to be happy; when all on a sudden the good landlord advanced from the farm-yard with a troubled countenance, calling for Mary, and Bessy, and Kate, a mess of milk, a jug of ale, and a bottle of brandy. "There's a man lying dead or dying in the cart-house," added he; "make haste, lasses! make haste!"

Mary, catching at the hope of life, hurried into the house to despatch some messenger for medical advice; his daughters flew to his assistance, and half the customers in the tap-room followed with instinctive curiosity to the cart-house.

The man was not dead; and mine host and little Kate were administering, or rather offering (for he seemed incapable either of speaking or swallowing) their various remedies.

"Who can he be, father?" said Kate; "what can have brought him here?"

"How should I know, child?" replied the man of the Tankard; "'tis a poor ragged, famished wretch, as you see, who I suppose could crawl no farther. But I think he'll live! He's looking about him! and he seems likely to come to. Get your cousin's smelling bottle, Bessy; and don't crowd round him so, good folks! Why even Lion has crept up to him, and is half smothering the poor wretch. That looks as if it was somebody the dog knew."

And the poor outcast, the sick, famished, ragged, perishing man, writhed on his straw, and groaned and gasped as if for speech.

"Where are Mary's salts, girls? See how Lion is licking the poor wretch's hands! Where is Mary?"

And at that instant Mary entered; the sick man half rose up, and she knew him! "William! gracious God! it is William!" And instantly she was kneeling at his side, and

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supporting him in her arms, aided, as it happened, by our old friend the keeper, who had been taking his morning draught in the tap. Poor William looked from one to the other—

"Are you married?" said he, with a strong effort.

"Yes," said George; "no," said Mary; both in a breath.

"To think of my not knowing my own son!" exclaimed the father, bending over him, the tears running over his rough cheeks. "But his very mother could not have known him, so fond of him as she used to be! Nobody would, but Mary. Welcome home, my boy! We'll soon set thee up again. Welcome, my own dear boy!"

"Welcome home, dear William!" echoed the sobbing sisters.

But William listened to none of them. "Are you married?" was again his question.

"Yes!" said George, smiling.

"But not to me, William! Not to me, dear William!" said Mary: and the poor runaway grasped her hand between his trembling ones, (Lion fondling them all the time,) and life, and health, and love were in the pressure; and the toils, the wanderings, the miseries of his four years' absence, were all forgotten in that moment of bliss!

OLD MASTER GREEN.

A VILLAGE SKETCH.

A PARTICULAR sort of mould, which in this county is scarcely to be found except in the tract of land called Chittling Moor, being wanted to form a compost for that very dear part of my small possessions, my beautiful geraniums, we determined to accompany, or rather to follow, in our pretty pony phaeton, the less aristocratic *cortège*, consisting of two boys with

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wheelbarrows, and old Master Green with a donkey-cart, who had been despatched to collect it some two hours before.

The day was one of the latest in August, and the weather splendidly beautiful, clear, bright, breezy, sunny. It would have been called too warm by one half of the world, and by the other too cold, which I take to be as near an approach to perfection as our climate, or any climate, can well compass. We had been sitting in our large parlour-like greenhouse; a superb fuschia, bending with the weight of its own blossoms, reaching almost to the top of the house, on one side of the door, and a splendid campanula, with five distinct stems, covered with large yet delicate lilac bells, on the other; the rich balmy scent of the campanula blending with the exquisite odours of tuberoses, jessamine, mignonette, full-blown myrtles, and the honey-sweet clematis, and looking out on gay beds of the latest flowers, China-asters, dahlias, hydrangeas blue and pink, phlox white and purple, the scarlet lobellia, and the scarlet geranium. In short, all within my little garden was autumn, beautiful autumn.

On the other side of our cottage the season seemed to have changed. The China roses and honeysuckles, with which it is nearly covered, were in the profuse bloom of early June, and the old monthly rose by the door-way, (the sweetest of roses!) together with a cluster of sweet-peas that grew among its branches, were literally smelling of summer. The quantity of rain that had fallen had preserved the trees in their most vivid freshness, and the herbage by the road-side and the shorter turf on the common had all the tender verdure of spring.

As we advanced, however, through the narrow lanes, autumn and harvest reasserted their rights. Every here and there, at the corners where branches jutted out, and in the straits where the hedges closed in together, loose straws of oats and barley, torn from their different waggons, hung dangling from the boughs, mixed with straggling locks of hay, the relics of

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the after-crop. We ourselves were fain to drive into a ditch, to take shelter from a dingy procession of bean-carriers. My companion, provoked at the ditchy indignity, which his horse relished no better than himself, asserted that the beans could not be fit to carry; but, to judge from the rattling and crackling which the huge black sheaves made in their transit, especially when the loaded wain was jerked a little on one side, to avoid entirely driving over our light and graceful open carriage, which it overtopped, and threatened to crush, as the giant in the fairy tale threatens Tom Thumb—to judge by that noisy indication of ripeness, ripe they were. The hedgerows, too, gave abundant proofs in their own vegetation of the advancing season. The fragrant hazel-nuts were hardening in their shells, and tempting the school-boy's hand by their swelling clusters; the dewberries were colouring; the yellow St. John's wort, and the tall mealy-leaved mullein, had succeeded the blushing bells of the foxglove, which, despoiled of its crimson beauty, now brandished its long spikes of seed-vessels upon the bank, above which the mountain-ash waved its scarlet berries in all the glory of autumn; whilst, as we emerged from the close narrow lanes into the open tract of Hartley Common, patches of purple heath just bursting into flower, and the gorse and broom pushing forth fresh blossom under the influence of the late rainy weather, waved over the light harebell, the fragrant thyme, and the springing fungi of the season. In short, the whole of our Berkshire world, as well as that very dear and very tiny bit of it called my garden, spoke of autumn, beautiful autumn, the best if not the only time for a visit to the Chittling Moor.

These Moors were pretty much what the word commonly indicates, a long level tract of somewhat swampy pasture land, extending along the margin of the Kennet, which, in other parts so beautiful, rolled heavily and lazily through its abundant, but somewhat coarse, herbage; a dreary and desolate place when compared with the general scenery of our richly-

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wooded and thickly-peopled country, and one where the eye, wandering over the dull expanse, unbroken by hill, or hedge, or timber tree, conveyed, as is often the case in flat, barren, and desolate scenes, an idea of space more than commensurate with the actual extent.

The divisions of this large piece of ground are formed of wide ditches, which at once serve to drain and to irrigate these marshy moors, so frequently overflowed by the river in spring and winter, and sometimes even in summer; it being no unusual catastrophe for the coarse and heavy crops to be carried away by a sudden flood, disappointing the hopes of the farmer, and baffling the efforts of the haymaker. A weary thing was a wet summer in the Chittling Moor, with the hay field one day a swamp and the next a lake; and the hay, or rather the poor drowned grass, that should have been hay, choking the ditches, or sailing down the stream! The best that could befall it was to be carried off in waggons in its grassy shape, and made comfortably and snugly on dry ground, in some upland meadow; but people cannot always find room for the outer integuments of three hundred acres of grass land, and, besides that difficulty, the intersecting ditches, with their clattering, hollow-sounding wooden bridges, presented no ordinary peril to the heavy wains, so that the landlord was fain to put up with little rent, and the farmer with small profit—too happy if the subsequent grazing paid the charge or the loss of the prolonged and often fruitless hay-harvest.

A dreary scene was the Chittling Moor; a few old willow pollards, the most melancholy of trees, formed the sole break to its dull uniformity, and one small dwelling, whose curling smoke rose in the distance above a clustering orchard, was the only sign of human habitation. This small cottage had been built chiefly to suit the circumstances of the Moor, which rendered a public-house necessary during the long hay-making; and it was kept by a widow, who contrived to make the profits of that watery but drouthy season pay for the want of

custom during the rest of the year. Not that the Widow Knight was absolutely without customers at any period; the excellence and celebrity of her home-brewed having insured to her a certain number of customers, who, especially on Sundays, used to walk down to the Chittling Gate (so was her domicile entitled) to partake of the luxuries of a pipe and a pot of ale, scream to the deaf widow, gossip with her comely daughter, or flirt with her pretty grandchild, (for the whole establishment was female,) as their several ages or dispositions might prompt.

Of this number none was more constant than our present attendant, old Master Green, and it is by no means certain whether his familiarity with the banks and pollards which afforded the true geranium mould may not have been acquired by his hebdomadal visits to the Widow Knight's snug and solitary ale-house.

Old George Green was indeed a veteran of the tap-room, one to whom strong beer had been for nearly seventy years the best friend and the worst enemy, making him happy and keeping him poor. He called himself eighty-five; and I presume, from the report of other people, as well as his own, (for when approaching that age, vanity generally takes the turn of making itself older,) that he might really be past fourscore. A wonderful man he was of his years, both in appearance and constitution. Hard work had counteracted the ill effects of hard drinking, as an equal quantity of labour, under the form of hard riding, sometimes used to do by a jovial fox-hunting squire of former times, and had kept him light, vigorous, and active, as little bent or stiffened by age as the two boys who were delving out the earth under his direction. The only visible mark which age had set upon him—mark did I say? a brand, a fire-brand—was in his nose, which was of the true Bardolphian size and colour, and a certain roll of the eye, which might perhaps, under any circumstances, have belonged to the man and his humour, but which much resembled that

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of a toper, when half-tipsy, and fancying himself particularly wise.

The very Nestor of village topers was Master Green, hearty, good-humoured, merry, and jolly, very civil, and a little sly. He was quite patriarchal in the number of his descendants, having had the Mahommedan allowance of four wives, although, after the Christian fashion, successively, and more children and grand-children than he could conveniently count. Indeed, his computation varied a little, according as he happened to be drunk or sober; for he was proud of his long train of descendants, just as his betters may be proud of a long line of ancestry; and, being no disciple of the Malthusian doctrine, thought he "had done the state" (that is, the parish) "some service," in rearing up a goodly tribe of sons and daughters, many of them in their turn grandfathers and grandmothers, and most of whom had conducted themselves passably in the world, as times go—thanks probably to a circumstance which he sometimes lamented, their being, men and women, but puny tipplers compared with their jolly progenitor. Even his favourite grandson and namesake, only son and heir of the most prosperous of his innumerous family, Master Green, the thriving carpenter of East Hartley, who, like a dutiful lad, came every Sunday afternoon to the Chitling Gate to meet his grandfather, abandoning for that purpose the cricket-ground at Hartley, where he, a singularly fine young man, had long been accounted the best player—even this favourite grandson was, he declared, little better than a milk-sop, a swallower of tea and soda-water. "I verily believe," said Master Green, "that a pot of double X would upset him!"

A friend and a promoter of matrimony in all its shapes, especially in the guise of a love-match, was our worthy great-grandfather, whether in his own person, or in the person of his descendants. Four wives had he had of happy memory and he spoke of them all with mingled affection and philo-

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sophy, as good sort of women in the main, though the first was somewhat of a slut, the second ugly, the third silly, and the last a scold, which, as he observed, "might be one reason that he missed her so much, poor woman! the house seemed so quiet and *unked;*"—whereupon he sighed, and then, with a roll of his eye and a knowing twist of his Bardolphian nose, began to talk of the necessity of his looking out for a fifth helpmate.

By this time the operation of collecting the geranium mould was in full activity; and the conversation of the old man and the two lively boys, to which we were authorized listeners, and in which my companion soon became an interlocutor, gave us to understand that they were in possession of some further information respecting Master Green's matrimonial intentions.

"We all know why he goes to the Chittling Gate every Sunday," said Ben, an arch saucy lad, of whom we have before heard in this volume.

"Any child may know that," responded Master Green, trying to look demure and innocent, like a young lady when rallied on her admirers; "any child can tell that. The Widow Knight brews the best ale in the parish."

"Ay, but that's not the only reason," said John, a modest youth of sixteen: "is it Ben?"

"It's reason enough," rejoined Master Green.

"But not *the* reason," retorted Ben.

"What! the widow herself?" quoth my companion.

"Lord, no, sir," interrupted Ben.

"'Twould be a very suitable match, and a snug resting-place, only I'm afraid he would drink up all the ale in the cellar;" pursued the interrogator.

"Lord, no, sir!" again exclaimed Ben. "Master Green thinks the widow too old."

"Too old! Why she's a score of years younger than himself, but I suppose he prefers the daughter?"

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"No, no, sir," rejoined Ben; "she's too old, too. The grand-daughter, the grand-daughter! That's the match for Master Green."

"What! the young pretty girl, Susan Parker, a girl of eighteen, marry a man of eighty! nonsense, Ben."

"They've been asked in church, sir," said John, quietly; "I heard it myself."

"Asked in church! But I thought the young carpenter was after Susan? Asked in church! Master Green, are you rivaling your own grandson?"

"His father, the sick carpenter, would not hear of that match," cried Ben, "because Susan had no money."

"And what does he say to this match, Ben?"

"Sir, he says that he likes it worse than t'other, but that he can't help this; that his father is an old fool, and must answer for his own folly."

"Well, but Susan! she never can be such a goose. It must be a mistake. Have you really been asked in church, Master Green? Have the banns actually been published?"

"Twice, sir, in full form," answered the old man gravely, "I wonder your honour did not hear them."

"And is the match really to take place?"

"Next Monday, your honour, God willing."

"Pshaw! nonsense! the thing's impossible! you are all joking."

"Time will prove, sir," rejoined Master Green, still more gravely; and, the geranium mould being now fairly collected, we parted.

And on the next Monday the marriage did take place sure enough, though not exactly in the way anticipated, George Green the younger proving to be the bridegroom, to the surprise of bridemaid, parson, and clerk: whilst the rich carpenter, unable to resist the double pleadings of his father and his son, and somewhat pleased to be spared the scandal of so youthful a step-mother, forgave the trick and the stolen

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match; and old George Green, in the fulness of his delight, got tipsier than ever, in honour of his success, and toasted the Widow Knight so often and so heartily in her own home-brewed, that it's odds but he becomes the landlord of that snug ale-house, the Chittling Gate, after all.

THE FRESHWATER FISHERMAN.

A SKETCH.

THIS pretty Berkshire of ours, renowned for its pastoral villages, and its picturesque interchange of common and woodland, and small enclosures divided by deep lanes, to which thick borders of hedgerow timber give a character of deep and forest-like richness, seldom seen in countries of more ambitious pretension;—this beautiful Berkshire is for nothing more distinguished than for the number and variety of its rivers. I do not mean, in this catalogue, to include the large proportion of bright, shallow trouting-streams, for the most part unchristened and unregistered even by a parish historian, or the compiler of a county map, and known only as "the brook" by the very people whose meadows they dance through. To confine myself to rivers of state and name, we have, first of all, the rapid, changeful, beautiful Loddon, a frisky, tricksy water-sprite, much addicted to wandering out of bounds, and as different from the timid, fearful nymph Lodona, whom Pope, in a metamorphosing strain, was pleased to assign as the source of those clear waters, as any thing well can be. Next we have the Kennet—"the Kennet swift, for silver eels renowned," according to the same author, and which, in our part at least, has, generally speaking, a fine pastoral character, now sweeping along through broad valleys of meadow-land,

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rich and green, and finely dappled by trees, chiefly oak and elm, in park-like groups; now confined within a narrower channel, and spanned by some lofty bridge as it passes the quiet village or small country-town, enlivening every scene which it approaches by the pleasant flow of its clear waters, cool and glittering as a moonbeam. Lastly and chiefly, we possess, for the whole length of the county, and for the most part forming its sinuous boundary, the deep majestic Thames, gliding in tranquil grandeur, with a motion so slow as to be almost imperceptible; reflecting as a mirror, in unbroken shadow, every tree and shrub that fringes its banks, and exhibiting, during all its meanders, a lake-like character of stillness and repose—a silent fulness—a calm and gentle dignity, which is, perhaps, in all things, from the human mind to the mighty river, the surest and highest symbol of power. It is singular, that even the small streamlet near Cirencester, where, under the almost equally celebrated name of Isis, the Thames takes its rise, is distinguished by the same unruffled serenity (the calmness of the infant Hercules) for which its subsequent course is so remarkable. And what a course it is! The classic domes of Oxford; the sunny plains of Berkshire; the Buckinghamshire beechwoods; Windsor, with its royal towers; Richmond, and its world of gardens; then London—mighty London; and then the sea—its only rival in riches and in fame. Half the bards of England have sung of their great river; but never, I think, has it been more finely praised than in two sonnets, which I will venture to transcribe from the manuscript which is open before me, though I may not dare to name their author: a man too eminent in the broad highway of life to care to be seen loitering in the flowery paths of poesy. They have a local propriety, since the writer, of whose birthplace Berkshire may well be proud, passed his early youth in this neighbourhood, and it is in remembrance of those days that they were written.

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TO THE THAMES AT WESTMINSTER, IN RECOLLECTION OF THE SAME RIVER BELOW CAVERSHAM.

With no cold admiration do I gaze
Upon thy pomp of waters, matchless stream!
For home-sick fancy kindles with the beam
That on thy lucid bosom coyly plays,
And glides delighted through thy crystal ways,
Till on her eye those wave-fed poplars gleam
Beneath whose shade her first and loveliest maze
She fashion'd; where she traced in richest dream
Thy mirror'd course of wood-enshrined repose
Bespread with hordes of spirits fair and bright,
And widening on till at her vision's close
Great London, only then a name of might,
To crown thy full-swoln majesty arose,
A rock-throned city clad in heavenly light.

TO THE SAME RIVER.

I may not emulate their lofty aim
Who, in divine imagination bold,
With mighty hills and streams communion hold
As living friends; and scarce I dare to claim
Acquaintance with thee in thy scenes of fame,
Wealthiest of rivers! though in days of old
I loved thee where thy waters sylvan roll'd,
And still would fancy thee in part the same.
As love perversely clings to some old mate
Estranged by fortune; in his very pride
Seems lifted; waxes in his greatness great;
And silent hails the lot it prophesied:
Content to think in manhood's palmy state
Some ling'ring traces of the child abide.

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Our business, however, is not with the mighty Thames—the "wealthiest of rivers"—but with the pleasant and pastoral Kennet.

One of the most romantic spots that it touches in its progress is a fisherman's cottage, on the estate of my friend Colonel Talbot, who, amongst his large manorial property, possesses a right of fishery for some mile or two up the river—a right which, like other manorial possessions, combines a good deal of trouble with its pleasure and its dignity, and obliges the colonel to keep up a sort of river police for the defence of his watery demesnes. This police consists of Adam Stokes, the fisherman, of his follower, Gilbert, and his boy, Ned Gilbert, who is, after all, but semi-aquatic, and belongs in "division tripartite" to the park-keeper, the game-keeper, and the fisherman, waging fierce war with the poachers in each of his vocations, one night in defence of the deer, the next of the pheasants, and the third of the pike; Gilbert, who in right of his terrene avocations wears a green livery and a gold-laced hat, is by no means a regular inhabitant of the cottage by the Kennet side, but may be found quite as frequently up at the park, sometimes at the dog-kennel, sometimes in the servants' hall, leaving the river to the efficient watchfulness of its amphibious guardians, Adam Stokes, the boy Ned, and their dog Neptune, who, excepting when Adam was attracted by the charms of a stronger liquid to the tap-room of the Four Horseshoes, were seldom seen half a furlong from their proper element.

Adam was a man fit to encounter poachers by land or by water—a giant of a man with more than a giant's strength, and without the gentleness which so often accompanies conscious power: he knew his full force, and delighted in its exhibition. The unwieldly boat was in his brawny hands a child's toy, and the heavy oar a bulrush. Bold was the poacher that dared to encounter Adam Stokes! His very voice, loud as that of a boatswain, was sufficient to awe any

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common ruffian, and the bold, bluff, weather-beaten visage, keen eye, and fearless bearing, were in excellent keeping with tones that seemed at their quiëtest as if issuing from a speaking-trumpet. His dress beseemed his person and his occupation —boots that might bid defiance to mud or water, a blue jacket that had borne many a storm, and an old sealskin cap, surmounting his shaggy black hair, formed his general equipment. Add a quid of tobacco rolling from side to side of a capacious mouth, a beard of a fortnight's growth, a knowing wink, and an uncouth but good-humoured grin, and you will have a tolerable notion of the outer man of Master Adam.

His inward qualities were pretty much what might be expected from such an exterior—rude, rough, and coarse, but faithful, bold, and honest, and not without a certain touch of fun and good fellowship, and blunt kindness, that rendered him no small favourite with his cronies of the Four Horseshoes, amongst whom his waterman's songs, and sailor's stories (yarns, as he called them) were deservedly popular. His early history was rather a puzzle in the good village of Aberleigh. He had been brought by Colonel Talbot to his present situation about ten years back, a stranger in the neighbourhood; and little as in general Adam affected concealment, he appeared to have some amusement in mystifying his neighbours on this point. Never were opinions more various. Some held that he had been a London waterman, and quoted his songs, his dexterity at the oar, and his familiarity with the slang peculiar to the great river, as irrefragable proofs that such had been his vocation. Others asserted that he was an old man-of-war's man, citing his long yarns, his proficiency in making and drinking grog, his boldness in battle, and his hatred of the Monsieurs, as convincing testimony in their favour. Others again (but they were his maligners) hinted that well as he liked grog, a drop of neat Cogniac was still more welcome, and insinuated that some of the yarns had about them a great air of smuggling;—whilst another party, more male-

volent still, asserted that boldness might belong to other trades as well as to a sailor, and that his skill as a fisherman, and such a subtlety in detecting nets and lines, as had never before been met with in these parts, savoured strongly of his having at some time or other followed the poaching business himself. This last, in particular, was the observation of his next neighbour, Nanny Sims, a washerwoman, and gossip of high repute, who being a thriving widow of some forty, or belike forty-five, had on his first arrival set her cap, as the phrase is, at Adam, and in affront at his neglect of her charms was, in a small way, as comfortably his enemy as heart could desire.

Little recked he of her love or her enmity. On he lived, a bold, bluff, burly bachelor, with his boy Ned, and his dog Neptune, each, after his several way, as burly and shaggy as himself, the terror of water-thieves, and the prime favourite of his master, who, a thorough sportsman, and altogether one of the most complete and admirable specimens that I have ever known of an English country-gentleman, refined by education and travel, set the highest value on his skill as a fisher, and his good management in preserving the fishery. A first-rate favourite was Adam Stokes.

His habitation was, as I have said, beautifully situated at a point of the Kennet, where winding suddenly round an abrupt hill, it flowed beneath a bank so high and precipitous, that but for its verdure it might have passed for a cliff, leaving just room on the bank for a small white cottage, the chimneys of which were greatly over-topped by the woody ridge behind them, while the garden on one side sloped in natural terraces from the hill to the river, and a narrow orchard on the other was planted ledge above ledge, like a vineyard on the Rhine. Fishing-nets drying on the fine smooth turf, and the boat fastened to a post and swaying in the water, completed the picture.

An unfrequented country road on the other side of the river

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was my nearest way to Talbot Park, and one day last March, driving thither in my little pony phaeton, I stopped to observe Adam, who had just caught an enormous pike, weighing, as we afterwards found, above twenty pounds, and after landing it on one side of the water, was busied in repairing a part of his tackle which the struggles of the creature had broken. It was still full of life as it lay on the grass, and appeared to me such a load, that after complimenting Adam (who was of my acquaintance) on the luck that had sent, and the skill that had caught, such a fish, I offered to take it for him to the park.

"Lord bless you, ma'am!" responded Master Stokes, eyeing my slight equipage, and pretty pony, as well as the small lad who was driving me, with some slyness, "Lord help you, ma'am, you've no notion how obstropulous these great fishes be. He'd splash your silk gown all over, and mayhap overset you into the bargain. No, no—I've catched him, and I must manage him—besides, I want to speak to madam. Here, lad," added he, calling to his boy, who, with Neptune, was standing on the opposite side of the river, watching our colloquy, "gather them violets on the bank; they're always the first in the country; and bring the basket over in the boat to take this fellow to the great house—mind how you pick the flowers, you lubber, I want 'em for madam."

Somewhat amused by seeing how my fair friend's passion for flowers was understood and humoured, even by the roughest of her dependents, I pursued my way to the house, passed the pretty lodge and the magnificent garden, with its hothouses, greenhouses, and conservatories, its fountains and its basins, its broad walks and shady alleys; drove through the noble park, with its grand masses of old forest-trees—oak, and beech, and elm, and tree-like thorns, the growth of centuries, thridded the scattered clumps, about which the dappled deer were lying; skirted the clear lakelet, where water-fowl of all sorts were mingled with stately swans, and finally gained the house, a superb mansion worthy of its grounds, at the door of

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which I met the Colonel, who, pheasant-shooting, and hunting, and coursing being fairly over, intended to solace himself with shooting rabbits, and was sallying forth with his gun in his hand, and a train of long-bodied, crooked-legged, very outlandish-looking dogs at his heels, of a sort called the rabbit-beagle, reckoned very handsome I find in their way, but in my mind pre-eminently ugly. I did not, however, affront my kind host, a person whom every body likes, in right of his frank, open, amiable character, and his delightful manners; I did not insult him by abusing his dogs, but passing with a gracious salutation, we parted—he to his sport, and I to my visit.

If Colonel Talbot be a delightful man, Mrs. Talbot is a thrice delightful woman. To say nothing of the higher qualities for which she is deservedly eminent, I have seldom met with any one who contrives to be at the same time so charming and so witty. She is very handsome, too, and combining her own full-blown and magnificent beauty with her love of that full-blown and beautiful flower, I call her the Queen of the Dahlias,—a nickname which she submits to the more readily, as her collection of that superb plant is nearly unrivalled. In March, however, even she, great forcer though she be, can hardly force a dahlia, so that I found her in her drawing-room without her favourite flower, but surrounded by stands of rhododendrons, azaleas, daphnes, pinks, lilies of the valley, and roses without end; and after first admiring and then deprecating her display of forced plants, as forestalling their natural blossoming, and deadening the summer pleasure, quoting to the same effect Shakspeare's fine lines in the *Love's Labour Lost*—

> "At Christmas I no more desire a rose
> Than look for snow on May's newfangled shows,
> But like of each thing that in season grows." *

After a little battle on this, an old subject of dispute between

* Perhaps in this argument Mrs. Talbot is right and I am wrong; for we can hardly have too many roses. But those parents and instructors

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us, we fell into talk on other topics, and I soon perceived that my charming hostess was not in her usual spirits.

"But what's the matter, my dear Mrs. Talbot? You say that all friends are well; and I see that the flowers are prosperous in spite of my lecture; and the pets,—pussy purring on the sofa, the swans sailing on the water, and the pied peacock tapping the window at this very moment;—the pets are flourishing like the flowers. What can have happened to vex you?"

"Enough to have disturbed the patience of Grisildis herself, if Grisildis had ever known the comfort of a favourite waiting-maid. Laurette has given me warning."

"Laurette! Is it possible! The paragon of *filles de chambre!* the princess of milliners! the very queen of the toilet! Laurette, so dexterous, so handy, she that could do not only all that was possible to waiting-women, but all that was impossible! and so attached too! what can be the cause? who can have stolen her from you?"

"She's going to be married!"

"To whom?"

"Heaven knows! she would not tell me his name, but described him as 'un brave garçon.' Somebody in the village, I fancy! some lout of a farmer, or bumpkin of a carpenter. She that cannot speak three words of English, and is as unfit for a farmer's wife as I am. To think of my losing Laurette."

At this point of our dialogue, Master Adam Stokes was announced, and we adjourned into the hall to admire the fish and talk to the fisherman. There stood Adam, cap in hand, more shaggy and ragged than ever, exulting over his enormous fish, and backed by his adherents, Ned and Neptune, whilst the airy Frenchwoman, tricked out as usual in her silk gown, her embroidered apron, her high comb, and her large earrings, stood against a marble table arranging the violets which Ned had brought in a small China cup. I must go to her own

who force the delicate plants called children into precocious blossoming, cannot enough study the deep wisdom of the concluding line.

language for words to describe the favourite French maid—*gentille et jolie* seem expressly made for her, and as she stood with an air of consciousness quite unusual to her manner, placing the violets topsy-turvy in her confusion, I thought that I had never seen Laurette half so attractive. Her lady took no notice of her, but remained in gracious colloquy with the fisherman. At last she turned towards the drawing-room.

"If you please, ma'am," said Adam, "I'd be greatly obliged to you, if you'd speak a good word for me to his honour." And there he stopped.

"What about, Adam?" inquired Mrs. Talbot, returning to the middle of the hall.

"About my marrying, ma'am; if so be the Colonel has no objection;" continued Adam, twirling his cap.

"Marrying!" rejoined Mrs. Talbot, "all the world seems thinking of marrying! who is the fair lady, Adam? Nanny Sims?"

"Nanny Sims! not she, indeed, ma'am," resumed Master Stokes. "I don't know who would trouble their heads about such an old hulk, when they might be master of such a tight-made vessel as this!" quoth the fisherman, grinning and jerking his head, and clutching the gown of the pretty Frenchwoman, whilst his faithful adherents, Ned and Neptune, grinned, and jerked, and wagged head and tail in unison.

"Laurette! do you mean Laurette? you who hate the French, and she who can't speak English?"

"A fig for her lingo, ma'am. Look what a tight little frigate 'tis! A fig for her lingo!"

"Et toi, Laurette! es tu folle?"

"Ah de grace, madame! c'est un si brave garçon!" And outrageous as the union seemed, as incongruous as a match between Caliban and Ariel, the lovers persevered, and the lady, half provoked and half amused, consented; and at the month's end they were married, with as fair a prospect of happiness as any couple in the parish.

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THE HAYMAKERS.

A COUNTRY STORY.

Amongst the country employments of England, none is so delightful to see or to think of as haymaking. It comes in the pleasantest season, amidst a green, and flowery, and sunshiny world; it has for scene the prettiest places,—park, or lawn, or meadow, or upland pasture; and withal it has more of innocent merriment, more of the festivity of an out-of-door sport, and less of the drudgery and weariness of actual labour, than any other of the occupations of husbandry. One looks on it, pretty picture as it is, without the almost saddening sympathy produced by the slow and painful toil of the harvest field, and, moreover, one looks on it much oftener. A very little interval of dressed garden shall divide a great country mansion from the demesne, where hay-cocks repose under noble groups of oaks and elms, or mingle their fragrance with the snowy wreaths of the acacia, or the honeyed tassels of the lime; and the fair and delicate lady who

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cannot tell wheat from barley, and the mincing fine gentleman who "affects an *ignorance* if he have it not," shall yet condescend not merely to know hay when they see it, but even to take some interest in the process of getting it up. In short, at the most aristocratic country tables, from the high sheriff of the county to the lord lieutenant, hay is a permitted subject; and the state of the clouds, or of the weather-glass, shall be inquired into as diligently, and be listened to with as much attention, as speculations on the St. Leger or the Derby, discussions on the breed of pheasants, or calculations on a contested election. Hay is very naturally felt to be a gentlemanly topic, since from the richest to the poorest every country gentleman is a hay-owner.

I have been used all my life to take a lively interest, and even so much participation as may belong to a mere spectator, in this pleasant labour; for I cannot say that I ever actually handled the fork or the rake. In former times our operations were on a grand scale, since the lawn before and around our old house, and the park-like paddock behind, were of such an extent as to make the getting in of the crop an affair of considerable moment in a pecuniary point of view. Now we have in our own hands only two small fields, the one a meadow of some three acres, about a mile off, the other a bit of upland pasture not much bigger, and rather nearer. The consequence of which diminution of property is, that I am ten times more interested in our small possession than ever I was in our large demesne, and that the produce of these two little bits of land—the minikin rick, not much better than a haycock itself, all of which is to be consumed by that special friend of mine, our pretty frisky cream-coloured horse,* of whom it is every day predicted that he will break our necks—appears much more important in my eyes than the moun-

* Now, alas! no more! Would that the beauty were alive again, even if he did put our lives in jeopardy! I shall never entertain so strong a personal friendship for any steed.

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tains of dried grass, which, after feeding some dozen horses, and half a dozen cows, were sold out amongst inn-keepers, coach proprietors, cattle dealers, and hay-buyers of all sorts, and sometimes in a plentiful year had even the honour to be advertised in a country newspaper, put up to public sale, puffed by the auctioneer, abused by the bidders, talked about, and lied about, and finally knocked down by the hammer—as great a piece of promotion as a hay-rick can well come to.

This trick of estimating one's possessions in an inverse ratio to their real value is, I believe, strange as the assertion may seem, no uncommon freak of that whimsical, but good for *something* piece of perversity called human nature. In my own case I can, besides, claim in mitigation for the mistake, (if mistake it be to take an interest in any thing innocent!) the extreme beauty of the two patches of ground on which grows the hay in question.

One of these grassplots is a breezy, airy, upland field, abutting on the southernmost nook of an open common, forming, so to say, one side of a sunny bay, half filled with a large clear pond of bright water, water always bright; the first swallows of the year are regularly seen there; a great farm-house with its bustling establishment directly opposite; a winding road leading across the green; and trees, cottages, children, horses, cows, sheep, and geese, scattered around in the gayest profusion—a living and moving picture. The most populous street of a populous city gives a less vivid idea of habitation, than the view from the gate, or from the high bank, feathered with broom and hazel—for the fence consists rather of a ditch than of a hedge, the field being as it were moated—of that lightsome and cheerful bit of pasture land.

The more distant meadow is prettier still; it has no regular approach, and is reached only through a chain of fields belonging to different neighbours, whose gates, close locked upon all other occasions, open only to admit the ponderous

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hay waggon, creaking under its burthen, and the noisy procession of pitchers and rakers by which it is accompanied. Surrounded by close and high hedges, richly studded by hedgerow timber, no spot can be more completely shut out from the world than this small meadow. A stream of considerable variety and beauty winds along one end, fringed on each margin by little thickets of copse wood, hawthorn, and hazel, mixed with trees of a larger growth, and clothed, intertwisted, matted, by garlands of wild rose and wild honeysuckle; whilst here and there a narrow strip of turf intervenes between these natural shrubberies and the sparkling, glittering, babbling stream, which runs so clearly over its narrow bed that every shoal of minnows is visible as they pass. Every vagary that a nameless brooklet well can play does this brook show off in its short course across the end of our meadow; now driven rapidly through a narrow channel by the curvature of the banks, fretting, and fuming, and chafing over the transparent pebbles; now creeping gently between clusters of the rich willow herb, and golden flag; now sleeping quietly in a wider and deeper pool, where the white water-lily has found room for its dark leaves and its snowy flowers, and where those quiet but treacherous waters seem about to undermine the grassy margent, which already overhangs them, and to lay bare the roots of the old willows. A tricksy streamlet is that nameless brook, and on the banks of that tricksy stream lies the scene of our little story.

Last summer was, as most of my readers probably remember, one of no small trial to haymakers in general, the weather being what is gently and politely termed "unsettled," which in this pretty climate of ours, during "the leafy month of June," may commonly be construed into cloudy, stormy, drizzly, cold. In this instance the silky, courtly, flattering epithet, being translated, could hardly mean other than wet—fixed, determined, settled rain. From morning to night the clouds were dropping; roses stood tottering on their stalks: straw-

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berries lay sopping in their beds; cherries and currants hung all forlorn on their boughs, with the red juice washed out of them; gravel roads turned into sand; pools into ponds; ditches into rivulets; rivers overflowed their channels; and that great evil a summer flood appeared inevitable. "The rain it raineth every day" was the motto for the month. Sheridan's wicked interpolation in Mr. Coleridge's tragedy, "drip, drip, drip, there's nothing here but dripping," seemed made expressly for the season. Cut or uncut, the grass was spoiling; the more the hay was made, the clearer it appeared that it would never make to any purpose; the poor cattle shook their ears as if aware of an impending scarcity; salt, the grand remedy for sopped hay, rose in the market; farmers fretted; and gentlemen fumed.*

So passed the "merry month of June." Towards the beginning of July, however, matters mended. A new moon made her appearance in the world, and that great stranger the sun, as if out of compliment to his fair cold sister, ventured out of the clouds to salute her across the sky, one evening just before his usual time of setting, and even continued the civility by leaving behind him such a glow of purple rosiness, and such a line of golden light, as illumined the whole horizon, and gave the most gracious promise for the ensuing day —a promise unusually well kept for so great a personage, that is to say, not quite forgotten. The weather, to be sure, was not quite perfect,—when was the weather ever known to be so? it was, on the contrary, of that description which is termed "catching;" but still there were intervals of brightness; the rain was less heavy; the sun did shine sometimes;

* It is well if they did no worse. A fair young friend of mine, whose father, one of the most accomplished persons that I have ever known, and by no means addicted to the use of naughty words on common occasions, rented about thirty acres of water-meadow, known by the name of "the moors," used always to call the hay-making time his "swearing month." He was wont to laugh at the expression—but I never heard him deny that it was true.

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and even when he refused to show that resplendent face of his, a light stirring breeze answered all hay-making purposes almost as well. In short, between wind and sunshine, we managed to get in our upland crop, with little danger and less damage, and encouraged by that success, and by the slow gentle rising of the weather-glass, which the knowing in such matters affirm to be much more reliable than a sudden and violent jump of the quicksilver, we gave orders to cut the little mead without delay, and prepared for a day's hay-making in that favourite spot.

We were not without other encouragements with respect to the weather. The sun himself had had the goodness to make "a golden set," and a rosy dawning, and those vegetable barometers the scarlet pimpernel in the hedge-rows, and the purple Venus's looking-glass in the garden, threw open their rich cups to receive his earliest beams, with a fulness of expansion seldom shown by those, I had almost said, sentient flowers, when there is the slightest appearance of rain. Our good neighbour the shoemaker, too, an in-door oracle, whose speculations on the atmosphere are not very remarkable for their correctness, prognosticated wet; whilst our other good neighbour, farmer Bridgwater, an out-of-door practical personage, whose predictions—and it is saying much for them—are almost as sure to come true as the worthy cordwainer's to prove false, boldly asseverated that the day would prove fine, and made his preparations and mustered his troops (for farmer Bridgwater is generalissimo in our hay-field) with a vigour and energy that would have become a higher occasion. He set six men on to mowing by a little after sun-rise, and collected fourteen efficient haymakers by breakfast time. Fourteen active haymakers for our poor three acres! not to count the idle assistants; we ourselves, with three dogs and two boys to mind them, advisers who came to find fault and look on, babies who came to be nursed, children who came to rock the babies, and other children who came to keep the rockers

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company and play with the dogs; to say nothing of this small rabble, we had fourteen able-bodied men and women in one hay-field, besides the six mowers, who had got the grass down by noon, and, finding the strong beer good and plentiful, magnanimously volunteered to stay and help to get in the crop. N. B. This abundance of aid is by no means so extravagant as it seems, especially in catching weather. Beer, particularly in country affairs, will go twice as far as money, and, if discreetly administered, (for we must not make even haymakers quite tipsy,) really goes as near to supply the place of the sun as any thing well can do. In our case the good double X was seconded by this bright luminary, and our operations prospered accordingly.

Besides being a numerous, ours was a merry group, very merry and very noisy; for amongst the country people, as amongst children, those two words may almost be reckoned synonymous. There was singing that might pass for screaming; laughter that burst forth in peals and in shouts; and talking in every variety of key, from the rough bluff commanding halloo of farmer Bridgwater, issuing his orders from one end of the field to another, to the shrill cry of dame Wilson's baby, which seemed to pierce upwards and cleave the very sky. A mingled buzz of talking was, however, the predominant sound, talking of which little could be collected except a general expression of happiness, dame Wilson's roaring infant being with one exception the only dissatisfied person in the field.

Nobody could imagine the joyous din of that little place. A "jovial crew" they were, though by no means "merry beggars;" for our haymakers were for that profession persons of respectability, rather indeed amateurs than professors,— saving perhaps dame Wilson and her set of boys and girls, who might be accounted poor, and a certain ragged Irishman called Jerry, who comes over every year harvesting, and is a general favourite with high and low; with these small draw-

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backs, (N. B. dame Wilson is a mountain of a woman, at least five feet in the girth, and Jerry a maypole of a man, who stands six feet three without his shoes,) with these trifling exceptions, our troop of haymakers might really pass for people of substance.

First came the commander-in-chief, farmer Bridgwater, a hearty sturdy old bachelor, rough and bluff and merry and kind, a great although a general admirer of our pretty lasses, to whom his blunt compliments and rustic raillery, of which the point lay rather in a knowing wink, a sly turn of the head, and a peculiar dryness of manner, than in the words, added to his unfailing good nature, rendered him always welcome.

Next in the list figures our respectable neighbour, Aaron Keep the shoemaker, who came to help us and to watch the weather. He is an excellent person is Aaron Keep, and he came, as he said, to help us; and I dare say he would have been very sorry if the hay had been quite spoiled; nevertheless, having predicted that it would rain, I cannot help thinking he considered it a little hard that no rain came. The least little shower, just to confirm his prognostics, would have made him happy, and he kept watching the clouds, and hoping and foretelling a thunderstorm; but the clouds were obstinate, and the more he predicted that a storm would come, the more it stayed away.

Then arrived Master Wheatley, our worthy neighbour the wheelwright, who, being also parish constable, might have abated the noise if he himself had not been the noisiest. I think he came to please his daughter Mary, a smiling airy damsel of thirteen, who never made hay before in her life. How enraptured the little girl was with the holiday! My dog Dash was the only creature in the field gay enough to keep pace with her frolics. They were playmates during the whole day.

Mine host of the Rose was also present, that model of all

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village landlords, mine host in his red waistcoat; and he also brought with him his pretty daughters, lasses of eighteen and twenty, who care no more for poor Dash than I do for a wax doll; I dare say they don't even know that he's a spaniel. Lucy had been to London this spring, and brought home a beau whom she had picked up there as a visitor to her papa, and, our hay-field being a good place for love-making, there too was he, displaying in handling a prong all the awkwardness that might be expected from a Cheapside haberdasher accustomed to the yard. He laughed at himself, however, with a very good grace, and seemed a well-conditioned and well-behaved person, his misfortune of cockneyism notwithstanding. They said that Miss Lucy would soon leave the Rose and take to measuring ribands herself. Patty too, the round-faced, rosy-cheeked, fair-haired, younger sister, my favourite (but that is a secret, for both are equally civil, and, as far as I know, equally good; I would not make any difference in the world, only—Patty is my favourite); Patty, said the world—the village world, was also not unlikely to leave the Rose, though for an abode only two doors removed from it; Mr. George Waring, our smart young saddler, having, they affirmed, won her heart; but upon looking out for Patty and George, thinking to find them engaged as the other couple were, what was my astonishment to see the poor little lass, her smiles gone and her roses faded, moping under the hedge alone, rather making believe to rake than actually raking; whilst Mr. George Waring was tossing about the hay in company with the handsome brunette Sally Wheeler, who was just (as I remembered to have heard) come home from service to be married, and looked prodigiously as if the young saddler was her intended spouse. Nothing was ever more suspicious. He looked brighter and gayer than ever, and so did Sally, and for certain they were talking of something interesting, something at which the gentleman smiled and the lady blushed, talking so earnestly that they even forgot to

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toss the hay about, and that farmer Bridgwater's loudest reprimand, although it startled every one else in the field, was apparently unheard by either of them.

"Alas! I fear Mr. George Waring will play poor Patty false," was my involuntary thought, as I glided amongst the thickets by the side of the stream, and established myself in a verdant nook quite out of sight of the gay scene I had quitted, from which I was parted by a natural shrubbery of honeysuckle and wild roses, covered with blossoms and over-canopied by the spreading branches of a large oak. A pleasant seat was that green bank, with the clear water flowing at my feet, gay with the yellow flag, the white lily, and the blue forget-me-not, and fragrant with the rich tufts of the elegant meadow-sweet, mingling its delicious odour with that of the wild rose, the honeysuckle, and the new-mown hay. A pleasant seat was that turfy bank, and, as the haymakers adjourned to the farther end of the field to dinner, a quiet one; until suddenly I heard first a deep sigh, and then two voices, from the other side of the oak-tree. I listened with somewhat of curiosity, but more of interest, to the following dialogue:—

"Why, my queen," said the bluff good-humoured voice of farmer Bridgwater, "what are you moping here for? And what have you done with your rosy cheeks? A'nt you well?"

"Yes," answered the sighing Patty.

"Go to dinner, then," responded the generalissimo of the hay-field.

"No," sighed the damsel; "I'd rather stay here."

"Shall Lucy bring you something to eat?" pursued the good farmer.

"No."

"Or your father?"

"No."

"Or Aaron Keep? I see he has done."

"No."

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"Or little Mary Wheatley? she'll be here like a bird."

"No, I don't want any dinner, thank you;" and then came a deep sigh,—such a sigh!

"Or I myself?" continued the honest farmer, not at all diverted from his purpose.

"No. It's very good of you," said Patty, half crying, "and I am very much obliged—but—"

"Perhaps you'd rather George Waring should bring it?" pursued the pertinacious inquirer, with a slight change of voice. "I'll go and send him directly."

"Don't think of such a thing," interrupted Patty, breathlessly; "he's engaged."

"No," chuckled the farmer, "that business is over; Sally and he have settled the wedding-day, and I have recommended you for bridemaid."

"Me!"

"Ay, you! One wedding leads to another. Wednesday week is to be the day; and after George Waring has given Sally to his brother Tom, he'll have an excellent opportunity for courting you."

"Tom! Tom Waring! Of whom are you speaking?"

"Of George's brother, to be sure, and Sally's beau. There he is, just come into the field. Did you never hear of Tom Waring? He only arrived from Andover last night, where Sally and he have been living next door to each other; and now they are going to marry and settle, as true lovers should. Why, what's the girl crying for?" exclaimed the good farmer, "crying and smiling, and blushing, and looking so happy! Did you think George was making love to her in his own proper person, you goosecap? Will you come to dinner now, you simpleton? you'd better, or I'll tell."

"Oh, farmer Bridgwater!"

"Wipe your eyes and come to dinner, or I'll send George Waring to fetch you; come along, I say."

"Oh, farmer Bridgwater!"—and off they marched; and the

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next I saw of the haymakers, George and Patty were at work together, and so were Tom and Sally, looking as happy all the four as ever people could do in this world.

THE FISHERMAN IN HIS MARRIED STATE.

When last I had seen Master Stokes the fisherman, in his bachelor condition, it was in the week when February ends and March begins, when the weather was as bluff and boisterous as his own bluff and boisterous self; when the velvet buds were just sprouting on the sallow, the tufted tassels hanging from the hazel, and the early violet and "rathe primrose" peeping timidly forth from sunny banks and sheltered crevices, as if still half afraid to brave the stormy sky.

The next time that I passed by the banks of the Kennet was in the lovely season which just precedes the merry month of May. The weather was soft and balmy, the sky bright above, the earth fair below; the turf by the road-side was powdered with daisies, the budding hedge-rows gay with the white ochil, the pansy, and the wild geranium; the orchards hung with their own garlands of fruit-blossoms, waving over seas of golden daffodils; the coppices tapestried with pansies, ground-ivy, and wood-anemone, whilst patches of the delicate wood-sorrel were springing under the holly brake and from the roots of old beech-trees; and the meadows were literally painted with cowslips, orchises, the brilliant flowers of the water-ranunculus, the chequered fritillary, and the enamelled wild hyacinth. The river went dancing and sparkling along, giving back in all its freshness the tender green of the landscape, and the bright and sunny sky; birds were singing in every bush; bees and butterflies were on the wing, and myriads of water-insects added their pleasant sound to the

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general harmony of nature. It was Spring in all its loveliness, and never is Spring more lovely than in our Kennet meadows.

The Fisherman's hut did not disgrace the beauty of the picture. The white cottage, nested in the green bank, with its hanging garden full of stocks and wall-flowers, its blooming orchard, and its thin wreath of grey smoke sailing up the precipitous hill, and lost amid the overhanging trees, looked like the very emblem of peace and comfort. Adam and his dog Neptune were standing in the boat, which Master Stokes's stout arm was pushing from shore with a long pole, nodding a farewell to his wife, and roaring at the top of his stentorian voice his favourite stave of "Rule Britannia;" Laurette, on her part, was seated at the open door of the cottage, trim as a bride, with her silk gown, her large ear-rings, her high comb, and her pretty apron, her dress contrasting strangely with her employment, which was no other than darning her husband's ponderous and unwieldy hose, but with a face radiant with happiness and gaiety, as her light and airy voice sung the light and airy burden of a song in high favour among the *soubrettes* of Paris.

> C'est l'amour, l'amour, l'amour,
> Qui fait le monde à la ronde;
> Et chaque jour, à son tour,
> Le monde fait l'amour.

"C'est l'amour, l'amour, l'amour," came ringing across the water in every pause of her husband's mighty and patriotic chant, mingled with the shrill notes of Ned, who was bird's-nesting on the hill-side, peeping into every furze-bush for the five speckled eggs of the grey linnet, and whistling "Oh no, we never mention her," with all his might.

It was a curious combination, certainly, and yet one that seemed to me to give token of much happiness; and on questioning my friend Mrs. Talbot, the charming Queen of the

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Dahlias* frankly admitted, that however it might turn out eventually, Laurette's match did at present appear to have produced more comfort to both parties than could have been anticipated from so preposterous a union. "Adam adores her," pursued Mrs. Talbot, "spends all the money he can come by in sailor-like finery, red ribands, and yellow gowns, which Laurette has too good a wardrobe to need, and too much taste to wear; can't pass within a yard of her without a loving pinch of her pretty round cheek, and swears by every seaman's oath that ever was invented, that she's the neatest-built vessel, with the comeliest figure-head, that ever was launched. And, incredible as it seems, Laurette loves him; delights in his rough kindness, his boldness, and his honesty; calls him still *un brave garçon;* enters into his humour; studies his comfort; has learnt more English during her six weeks marriage than in six years that she lived with me; and has even advanced so far as to approach, as nearly as a French tongue may do, to the pronunciation of her own name, Stokes—a terrible trial to Gallic organs. In short," continued Mrs. Talbot, "of a very foolish thing, it has turned out better than might have been expected; Adam's adherents, Ned and Neptune, fairly idolize their new mistress; poor thing, her kindness, and good-nature, and gaiety, were always most delightful; and Ned is, she assures me, a very handy boy in the house, does all the dirty work, dusts and scrubs, and washes, and cooks, and trots about in a pair of high pattens and a checked apron, just exactly like a maid of all-work. I send Gilbert to her almost every day with one trifle or another, sometimes a basket of provisions, sometimes my reversionary flowers, (for Laurette can't live without flowers,) and, on the whole, I really think she will do very well."

This account was most satisfactory; but happening again to pass Laurette's cottage in the bowery month of June, I saw

* She has fairly taken to the title, as witness a note which I have received from her, signed "Dahlia Regina."

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cause to fear that a change had passed over the pretty Frenchwoman's prospects. Outwardly the picture was as bright, or brighter than ever. It was summer, gay, smiling summer. The hawthorn buds in the hedge-rows were exchanged for the full-blown blossoms of the wayfaring tree,* whose double circle of white stars, regular as if cut with a stamp, forms so beautiful a cluster of flowerets, and contrasts so gaily with the deep pink of the wild rose, and the pale, but graceful garlands of the woodbine; the meadows had, indeed, lost their flowery glory, and were covered partly with rich swathes of new-cut grass, and partly with large haycocks, dappling the foreground with such depth and variety of light and shadow; but the river's edge was gay as a garden with flags and water-lilies, and the pendent bunches of the delicate snowflake, the most elegant of aquatic plants; and Laurette's garden itself, one bright bed of pinks, and roses, and honeysuckles, and berry-bushes, with their rich transparent fruit, might almost have vied in colour and fragrance with that of her mistress. The change was not in the place, but in the inhabitants.

Adam was employed in landing a net full of fish, perch, roach, and dace, such a haul as ought to have put any fisherman into good humour, but which certainly had had no such effect on the present occasion. He looked as black as a thunder-cloud, swore at the poor fish as he tossed them on the bank, called Ned a lubber, and when, in a fit of absence, he from mere habit resumed his patriotic ditty, shouted "Britons never will be slaves," with such a scowl at his poor foreign wife, that it could only be interpreted into a note of defiance.

* For some charming stanzas to the Wayfaring-tree (remarkable also for its dark, currant-shaped leaf, with a pale cottony lining, which produces a singular effect when turned up by the wind)—for some admirable verses to this elegant wild shrub, see Mr. Howitt's *Book of the Seasons*, one of the most interesting and delightful works on natural history that has appeared since White's *Selborne*.

She, on her side, was still working at her cottage-door, or rather sitting there listlessly with her work (a checked shirt of her churlish husband's) in her lap, her head drooping, and the gay air of "C'est l'amour," exchanged for a plaintive romance, which ran, as well as I could catch it, something in this fashion:

Celui qui sut toucher mon cœur,
Jurait d'aimer toute la vie,
Mais, hélas ! c'était un trompeur,
Celui qui sut toucher mon cœur.

S'il abjurait cruelle erreur,
S'il revenait à son amie,
Ah ! toujours il serait vainqueur,
S'il abjurait cruelle erreur.

And when the romance was done, which might have touched Adam's heart, if he could but have understood it, poor Laurette sighed amain, took up the checked shirt, and seemed likely to cry; Neptune looked doleful, as one who comprehended that something was the matter, but could not rightly understand what; and Ned was in the dumps. A dreary change had come over the whole family, of which the cause was not known to me for some time afterwards:—Adam was jealous.

The cause of this jealousy was no other than the quondam candidate for the fisherman's favour, his prime aversion, Nanny Sims.

This Nanny Sims was, as I have said, a washerwoman, and Adam's next neighbour, she tenanting a cottage and orchard on the same side of the river, but concealed from observation by the romantic and precipitous bank which formed so picturesque a background to Laurette's pretty dwelling. In person, Nanny was as strong a contrast to the light and graceful Frenchwoman as could well be imagined; she being short and stout, and blowzy and frowzy, realizing exactly, as to form, Lord Byron's expression, "a dumpy woman," and accompany-

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ing it with all the dowdiness and slovenliness proper to her station. Never was even washerwoman more untidy. A cap all rags, from which the hair came straggling in elf-locks over a face which generally looked red-hot, surmounted by an old bonnet, originally black, now rusty, and so twisted into crooks and bends that its pristine shape was unguessable; a coloured cotton handkerchief pinned over a short-sleeved, open stuff gown, and three or four aprons, each wet through, tied one above another, black stockings, men's shoes, and pattens higher and noisier than ever pattens were, completed her apparel.

Her habits were such as suited her attire and her condition. An industrious woman, it must be confessed, was Nanny Sims. Give her green tea, and strong beer, and gin at discretion, and she would wash the four-and-twenty hours round, only abstracting an hour apiece for her two breakfasts, ditto ditto for her two luncheons, two hours for her dinner, one for her afternoon's tea, and another for supper. And then she would begin again, and dry, and starch, and mangle, and iron, without let or pause, save those demanded by the above-mentioned refections. Give her gin enough, and she never seemed to require the gentle refreshment called sleep. Sancho's fine ejaculation, "Blessed is the man that invented sleep!" with which most mortals have so entire a sympathy, would have been thrown away upon Nanny Sims. The discoverer of the still would have been the fitter object of her benediction. Gin, sheer gin, was to her what ale was to Boniface; and she throve upon it. Never was woman so invulnerable to disease. Hot water was her element, and she would go seething and steaming from the wash-tub, reeking and dripping from top to toe, into the keenest north-east wind, without taking more harm than the wet sheets and table-cloths which went through her hands. They dried, and so did she; and to all feeling of inconvenience that parboiled and soddened flesh seemed as inaccessible as the linen.

A hardworking woman was Nanny—but the part of her

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that worked hardest was her tongue. Benedick's speech to Beatrice, "I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer," gives but a faint notion of the activity of that member in the mouth of our laundress. If ever mechanical contrivance had approached half so nearly to the perpetual motion, the inventor would have considered the problem as solved, and would have proclaimed the discovery accordingly. It was one incessant wag. Of course, the tongue was a washerwoman's tongue, and the chatter such as might suit the accompaniments of the wash-tub and the gin-bottle, not forgetting that important accessory to scandal in higher walks of life, the tea-table. The pendulum vibrated through every degree and point of gossiping, from the most innocent matter-of-fact to the most malicious slander, and was the more mischievous, as being employed to assist the laundry-maid in several families, as well as taking in washing at home, her powers of collecting and diffusing false reports were by no means inconsiderable. She was the general tale-bearer of the parish, and scattered dissension as the wind scatters the thistle-down, sowing the evil seed in all directions. What added to the danger of her lies was, that they were generally interwoven with some slender and trivial thread of truth, which gave something like the colour of fact to her narrative, and that her legends were generally delivered in a careless undesigning style, as if she spoke from the pure love of talking, and did not care whether you believed her or not, which had a strong, but unconscious effect on the credulity of her auditors. Perhaps, to a certain extent, she might be innocent of ill-intention, and might not, on common occasions, mean to do harm by her evil-speaking; but, in the case of Laurette, I can hardly acquit her of malice. She hated her for all manner of causes: as her next neighbour; as a French-woman; as pretty; as young; as fine; as the favourite of Mrs. Talbot; and last, and worst, as the wife of Adam Stokes; and she omitted no opportunity of giving vent to her spite.

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First, she said that she was idle; then, that she was proud; then, that she was sluttish; then, that she was extravagant; then, that she was vain; then, that she rouged; then, that she wore a wig; then, that she was by no means so young as she wished to be thought; and then, that she was ugly. These shafts fell wide of the mark. People had only to look at the pretty, smiling Laurette, and at her neat cottage, and they were disproved at a glance. At last, Nanny, over the wash-tub at the Park, gave out that Laurette was coquettish; and that she would have Master Adam look about him; that honest English husbands who married French wives, and young wives, and pretty wives into the bargain, had need to look about them; that she, for her part, was very sorry for her worthy neighbour—but, that folks who lived near, saw more than other folks thought for, and then Nanny sighed and held her tongue. Nanny's holding her tongue produced a wonderful sensation in the Park laundry; such an event had never occurred there before; it was thought that the cause of her speechlessness must be something most portentous and strange, and questions were rained upon her from all quarters.

For an incredible space of time (at least two minutes) Nanny maintained a resolute silence, shook her head, and said nothing. At last, in pure confidence, she disclosed to five women, the laundry-maid, the dairy-maid, two housemaids, and another char-woman, the important fact; that it was not for nothing that Gilbert carried a basket every day from Mrs. Talbot to Laurette; that her husband, poor man, had not found it out yet, but that, doubtless, his eyes would be opened some day or other; that she did not blame Gilbert so much, poor fellow, the chief advances being made by the foreign madam, who had said to her, in her jargon, that she should be dead if the basket did not come every day, meaning, no doubt, if he did not bring the basket; and that all the world would see what would come of it. Then, recommending secrecy, which all parties promised, Nanny put on her shawl, and her pattens,

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and trudged home; and before night the whole house knew of it, and before the next day the whole parish—the only exceptions being, perhaps, Laurette herself, and Colonel and Mrs. Talbot, who were, as great people generally are, happily ignorant of the nonsense talked in their own kitchen.

Two persons, at all events, heard the story, with as many circumstantial additions as the tale of the three black crows—and those two were Adam Stokes, whom it made as jealous as Othello upon somewhat the same course of reasoning, and Gilbert himself, who, something of a rural coxcomb, although no practised seducer, began at last to believe that what every body said must be partly true, that though he himself were perfectly guiltless of love, the fair lady might have had the misfortune to be smitten with his personal good gifts, (for Gilbert was a well-looking, ruddy swain, of some nineteen or twenty, the very age when young lads confide in the power of their own attractions,) and to make up his mind to fall in love with her out of gratitude.

Accordingly he began to court Laurette at every opportunity, and Laurette, who, in spite of her French education, had no notion that an Englishman's wife could be courted by any body but her husband, and whose comprehension of the language was still too vague to enable her to understand him thoroughly, continued to treat him with her usual friendly kindness, the less inclined to make any observation on his conduct, since she was altogether engrossed by the moodiness of her husband, who had suddenly changed from the most loving to the most surly of mortals. Laurette tried to soothe and pacify him, but the more she strove against his ill humour, the worse it grew, and the poor young Frenchwoman at last took to singing melancholy songs, and sighing, and drooping, and hanging her head like a bereaved turtledove. It was in this state that I saw her.

Matters were now advancing towards a crisis. Gilbert saw Laurette's dejection, and imputing it to a hopeless passion for

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himself, ventured to send her a *billet-doux*, written by Colonel Talbot's valet, (for although he had learnt to write at a national school, he had already contrived to forget his unpractised lesson,) which, in terms fine enough for a valet himself, requested her to honour him with a private interview at the stile, by the towing-path, at nine in the evening, when Adam would be away.

This English, which was too fine to be good—that is to say, to be idiomatic, proved more intelligible to Laurette than his previous declarations, although aided by all the eloquence of eyes. She, however, resolved to take further advice on the occasion, and showed the epistle to Ned.

"What is this writing here?" said Laurette; "What will it say?"

"It's a love letter, Mrs. Stokes;" answered Ned.

"What does it want?" questioned Mrs. Stokes; "me to give a rendezvous at de stile?"

"Yes," rejoined Ned; "you to go to the stile."

"De people is mad!" exclaimed poor Laurette. "Dere's your masterre"—

"Master's jealous!" cried Ned.

"And dis wicked man!"

"He's in love!"

"De people is fools!" exclaimed poor Laurette; "De people is mad! But I'll go to de stile—and Nède, you and Nèpe shall go too."—And so it was settled.

Nine o'clock came, and the party set off. And about five minutes past nine Nanny Sims met Adam near the towing-path.

"Do you want your wife, Master Stokes?" quoth the crone; "are you looking for Gilbert? I saw them both but now, one a little way on this side of the stile, the other a little beyond. They'll have met by this time." And, without pausing for an answer, on she went.

Adam pursued his walk with furious strides, and paused as he came within sight of the place, considering in which way

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he had best announce his presence. The supposed lovers had not yet met, but in an instant Gilbert jumped over the stile and caught hold of Laurette, and in another instant the active Frenchwoman escaped from his arms, gave him a box on the ear that almost upset him, called to "Nède" and "Nèpe," both which trusty adherents lay in ambush by the way side, and poured forth such a flood of scolding in French and broken English, mingled with occasional cuffs, the dog barking and Ned laughing the whilst, that the discomfited gallant fairly took to his heels, and fled. In his way, however, he encountered Adam, who, without wasting a word upon the matter, took him up in one hand and flung him into the Kennet.

"A ducking 'll do him no harm," quoth Adam; "he can swim like a fish—and if I catch Nanny Sims, I'll give her a taste of cold water too," added the fisherman, hugging his pretty wife, who was now sobbing on his bosom, "and I deserve to be ducked myself for mistrusting of thee like a landlubber, but if ever I sarve thee so again," continued he, straining her to his honest bosom, "if ever I sarve thee so again, may I have a round dozen the next minute, and be spliced to Nanny Sims into the bargain."

SEA-SIDE RECOLLECTIONS.

Like most of the inhabitants of this little island, I have been occasionally in the habit of spending some of the summer months and the early part of the autumn by the sea.* But ex-

* Upon it I have not often trusted myself, being somewhat of Bishop Hall's mind, who uses the following racy expressions with regard to a voyage which he had occasion to take: "The sea brooked not me, nor I it; an unquiet element, made only for wonder and use, not for pleasure. Alighted once from that wooden conveyance and uneven way, I bethought myself how fondly life is committed to an unsteady and reel-

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cepting for one twelvemonth of my life I was never a resident on the coast, and that residence occurred when I was between the ages of eight and ten; rather short of the one period, and somewhat turned of the other. That was my only opportunity of making acquaintance with the mighty ocean in its winter sublimity of tempest and storm; and partly, perhaps, from the striking and awful nature of the impression, partly from some peculiarity of character and of situation, as a lonely, musing, visionary child, the recollection remains indelibly fixed in my memory, fresh and vivid, as if of yesterday. It was a bold and dangerous coast, and the wintry tempest was as perilous as it seemed. Often and often have I, refusing to go to bed, watched at an upper window with the maid whose business it was to attend me, on a December night, striving to catch a glimpse, through the almost palpable darkness, of some vessel struggling with the gale, whose position was shown momentarily by the brief glare of the minute gun, calling for unavailing aid, or the brighter flash of the lightning which illumined sea and sky in lurid flame, only to leave them in a more frightful obscurity. I have gazed through many a midnight with intense and breathless interest on scenes like these; and then in the morning I have seen the cold bright wintry sun shining gaily on the dancing sea, still stirred by the last breath of the tempest, and on the floating spars and parted timbers of the wreck. Once, too, and only once, I saw a human body thrown on shore amid the rocks. I had watched the dark and strange looking object (it was the corpse of a sailor) as it lay tossing on the waves, without in the slightest degree suspecting that it was a dead body, until a fearful and unearthly shriek from a group of women assembled on the beach, informed me that the helpless and almost shapeless object which the waves had just flung ashore, was no other

ing piece of wood, to fickle winds, and restless waters, whilst we may set foot on stedfast and constant earth." What would the good bishop have said to steam-boats, and the added dangers of explosion and fire?

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than the swoln and blackened remains of a fellow-creature. I shall never forget that shriek. The wreck had been a trading vessel belonging to the port, and the women assembled were the wives, mothers, sisters, and children of the crew; one of whom had recognised her father in the disfigured corpse. I never can forget that cry.

The place of our residence was an old sea-port on the southern coast of England, about a hundred and fifty miles from London, and situated on the point of union between two counties, the principal part of the town being, I believe, in Dorset; but the character of the scenery, the boldness of the coast, and the rich woodiness of the inland views, varied by hill and dale, and sparkling streamlet, belonged entirely to Devonshire, beautiful Devonshire. The town itself was of great antiquity, and considerable historical interest, not much frequented as a watering-place, although occasionally resorted to by some of the wealthy inhabitants of Bristol, who preferred it to the gayer and showier, but less convenient marine villages which had sprung into fashion on the Devonshire coast, and still distinguished by its fine harbour, its magnificent pier, the large coasting trade consequent on these advantages, and the degree of political importance, almost inevitably attached to a borough which possesses the troublesome privilege of returning two members to serve in parliament.

Our habitation, although situated not merely in the town but in the principal street, had nothing in common with the small and undistinguished houses on either side and in front, although they again were widely different from the smart and unsubstantial rows and crescents of a flourishing watering-place, being, for the most part, old, dingy, and irregular, a miserable mixture of shabby shops, noisy hotels, and lodging-houses fitted up in Queen Anne's days.

Our residence might lay claim to even an earlier date. It was a very large-fronted stone mansion, terminated at either end by massive iron gates, the pillars to which were sur-

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mounted with spread eagles, (the crest, probably, of the first possessor,) and balanced by an old-fashioned stone porch with seats in the centre of the house, which, as well as the whole frontage, was covered with the luxuriant myrtles, passion-flowers, white jessamine, and moss-roses, peculiar to the mild climate of our southern coast. The house itself, infinitely too large for our family, was built round a quadrangle, or interior court, the best apartment looking on a small lawn surrounded by trees and shrubs, (the arbutus especially, I remember, was in splendid profusion,) and terminated by a large conservatory and a filbert walk.

Behind this walk was a series of hanging gardens parted by hedges of myrtles and roses, and descending down a sharp declivity, planted with strawberries,* (always so beautiful and so fragrant, whether in the leaf, the flower, or the fruit,) to a shallow, babbling brook, on the other side of which was a meadow richly dotted with timber trees, and edged at the extremity by a double row of limes, which completely shut out all sight or sound of the suburban cottages on the other side of the enclosure. One of these gardens, that which I was permitted to call mine, had underneath the high steep bank which divided it from the lawn, a rudely built but very tasteful grotto, formed of portions of rock, shells, ores, and aquatic plants, at the innermost end of which gushed a natural spring, never overflowing its small sandy basin, and yet always full; there doubtless it is still. Years many and long have passed since I have sat beside that tiny fountain, and yet never have

* The mixture of strawberry-beds, and indeed of fruit in general, adds much to the charms of a flower-garden. One of the prettiest that I know is the lady's garden at Maiden Erleigh, originally a large kitchen garden enclosed by high walls, but sloping to the south, and so well adapted to flowers, that the vegetables have been banished, whilst the fruit-trees and berry bushes have been suffered to retain their station, giving just the variety of light and darkness, sun and shade, which the plants require, and adding their own beauties of bright blossom and pendant fruit to the tulips and dahlias. I do not know any thing prettier, than to see the lovely daughters of that hospitable house plucking baskets of grapes, or nosegays of geraniums, for some favoured guest.

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I forgotten the intense pleasure which I derived from watching its clear and crystal wave:

> "Long may the spring,
> Quietly as a sleeping infant's breath,
> Send up cold waters to the *sojourner*
> With soft and even pulse! nor ever cease
> Yon tiny cone of sand its soundless dance,
> Which at the bottom, like a fairy's page,
> As merry and no taller, dances still,
> Nor wrinkles the smooth surface of the fount,
> Where twilight is and coolness: here is moss,
> A soft seat, and a deep and ample shade."
>
> COLERIDGE.

Next to my delight in that grotto, was my love for a chamber miscalled my play-room, opening out of my nursery, from which it descended by a short flight of stairs, with an old Gothic balustrade, which, together with an arched ceiling, high and narrow pointed windows far above my reach, and the carved oak pannelling which covered the walls, gave an air of gloom and solemnity to the apartment. Here I had a great collection of ores, spars, shells, and petrifactions, the toys which at that time I loved best, and in arranging them, and poring over the books of our large and rich English library, the hours of my lonely and uncompanioned childhood were principally spent. Bishop Percy's collection of old ballads was, I think, the book that I read most, and if I have been and am still dreamy, meditative, visionary, and melancholy, it is, I verily believe, to the influence of that one year passed in a stately and gloomy seclusion, pursuing, amidst the grandeur of nature, a course of reading only calculated to feed the romance of a shy and concentrated character, that I owe a turn of mind so ill fitted to meet the demands of a stirring and busy world. Certainly I would not so rear a child.

This influence of local situation on a girl so young was, however, undreamt of by my parents. A person of good character, a sort of English Bonne half-servant, and half-governess, had the nominal charge of me, and was well con-

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tent with my quietness and docility; my dear mother had three or four young relations, misses in their teens, staying with her during nearly the whole time, and was sufficiently occupied in playing the chaperon to the dull gaieties of the place, taking them to the half-empty rooms, the prim parties, and the formal balls which the season might afford. A tedious duty was that, Heaven knows! Of course, I was too young to be admitted to the society, such as it was; but I had even then a glimmering perception of its being any thing but exhilarating—so few persons and so many pretensions—such a jostling of poor gentility with vulgar riches—such an overflow of ladies, and such a paucity of men. The leader of the genteel party was a dowager countess, almost past every thing but carpet-work and quadrille; a tall, pale, shadowy figure, with as few words as a well-accomplished parrot, and I suppose about the same quantity of idea. Her rival was the rich wife of a Bristol merchant, a tun of a woman, abounding in loud vulgar talk, and full of coarse hospitality and noisy good humour. I rather think that she was the more popular of the two, though, according to my mind, by far the greater evil. One might very fairly forget the lady countess, even though the carpet-work and its huge machine of a frame were in the room;—but I defy you to escape from the sight or sound of madame, even though half a street were between ye. I am not sure whether my aristocratical predilections may not date from that period, together with my other romantic fancies. That female Jack Cade, Mrs. Twoshoes, was enough to cure any mortal of jacobinism, as the phrase went then. Her cause could not be a good one. That fact came upon us with the certainty of a mathematical demonstration. My lady might not be right; but she must be wrong. That truth was past dispute.

Of the society, however, such as it was, I, of course, know little. I did not even accompany my mother in her morning visits. My walks were confined to rambles on the shore with my maid, or, still more to my delight, with my dear father, the

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recollection of whose fond indulgence is connected with every pleasure of my childhood. The town lay in the centre of a natural bay, and on the one side the sands went sweeping under cliffs of a tremendous height and blackness, down which a rapid stream came pouring its slender waters like a thread of silver, to an abrupt headland, beyond which the cliff had in some former century given way, and where masses of earth, huge trees, and even an old mossy orchard, were mingled in most romantic confusion with huge rocks, blackened by exposure, and the gardens, barns, and other buildings of a small farm-house.

On the opposite side of the bay, the coast road, after passing the pier and the harbour, wound under rocks of which large fragments strewed the shore, and which every moment seemed threatening to fall,* to a pretty village about a mile and a half from the town. This was our most common walk. My father, a dabbler in science, with his hammer and basket, breaking off fragments of rock to search for the curious spars and still more singular fossil remains for which the spot is famous, I picking up shells and sea-weeds, watching the fishermen as they landed their unhappy hauls, or those semi-aquatic animals, the men-like bathing women, performing their similar though opposite functions, as they immersed the scarcely less unfortunate inmates of their machines in the briny element. What enjoyment it was to feel the pleasant sea-breeze, and see the sun dancing on the waters, and wander as free as the sea-bird over my head beneath those beetling cliffs! Now for a moment losing sight of the dear papa, and now rejoining him with some delicate shell, or brightly coloured sea-weed, or imperfect cornua ammonis, inquiring into the success of his graver labours, and comparing our discoveries and our treasures. What pleasure, too, to rest at the well-known cottage, the general termination of our walk,

* The part of which the danger seemed most imminent was the church-yard, perhaps one of the most finely situated in England, in spite of its being so perilously undermined.

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where old Simon, the curiosity-monger, picked up a mongrel sort of livelihood, by selling fossils and petrifactions to one class of visitors, and cakes, and fruit, and cream to another. His scientific bargains were not without suspicion of a little cheatery, as my companion used, laughingly, to tell him, though, amused by the jargon of the old man, and the composure with which he bore the detection of any small roguery, he suffered himself to be imposed upon in a small way in his own person; but the fruit and curds were honest, as I can well avouch; and the legends of petrified sea-monsters, with which they were seasoned, bones of the mammoth, and skeletons of the sea-serpent, have always been amongst the pleasantest of my sea-side recollections.

A MOONLIGHT ADVENTURE.

I AM no lover of moonlight, unpoetical and ignominious as the avowal is; such is the fact, and I confess it frankly. I hate darkness and shadow, and a pallid fitful light, as much as I like distinctness, and brightness, and colour, and, therefore,

love the sun. Give me the day's beauty, and who will may take the night's. I leave the lady moon to those Endymions the poets. Nay, so far do I carry my distaste to that fair luminary, that half-light, for half-light I greatly prefer, sitting indoors over the red glowing embers of a wood-fire, (the place of all others for a comfortable chat,) to shivering in marble colonnades, or trellised arbours, under the fullest moon that ever shone. There is something in that cold, pale, trembling ray that is sure to check conversation. Even those persons who are so far from joining in my opinion, that they would swear by their honour that compared to the moonbeams the blessed sunshine is naught, are yet unconsciously chilled by their influence, and after exclaiming how beautiful! have little else to say. The nightingale, to be sure, I must admit the nightingale,—but then in spite of Shakspeare's mistake* on the subject, his matchless song is heard in the general pause of noon (when so many of the common birds are hushed) even more finely than in the silence of midnight,—and never, I think, comes on the ear so sweetly as when mingled in some leafy solitude with the tender cooing of the wood-pigeon.

I am no lover of moonlight. Most of my adventures in that way have been of a disastrous sort, whether by land or by water. One fine summer evening, for instance, returning in the captain's boat, gallantly manned by the officers of the ship from a frigate where we had dined, to the Isle of Wight where we were residing, the boat was unluckily stranded off St. Helen's, and we were obliged to wait five dismal hours until the tide was so good as to come and take us off, the captain's lady, a peevish, shrewish personage, taking occasion to fret, and fume, and scold the whole time, ringing the changes on all the evils that were likely to befall us, from

* One almost admits a mistake of Shakspeare's as authority from respect, not only to the great name of the greatest of poets, but to his extraordinary accuracy of observation.

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catching cold to being drowned, until she worked herself up into a fit of hysterical crying, and was effectually quieted by the first lieutenant's throwing a hat full of sea-water in her face. I never shall forget those five hours. Then, again, during the very next summer, being at Southampton, and making an excursion as far as Ryde in a friend's yacht, we had the calamity on our passage back to be becalmed for nearly the same period, just opposite Netley Abbey, and to have on board two musical young ladies, who obligingly offered to beguile the time by the exercise of their accomplishment, and aggravated our misfortune by every variety of scream and squall, of which that formidable personage, a singing young lady, is capable. I remember at the time comparing the inflictions, and thinking that the scolding, crying, and sobbing of the stranded boat (to say nothing of the satisfactory conclusion of the sousing) were greatly preferable to the bravuras and duets of the yacht. Besides which, nobody flung literal cold water on the fair singers, though, metaphorically speaking, it was pretty freely administered.

It must be admitted, that the winds and the waves were the chief aggressors in these grievances; but there shone the moon bright and cold, laughing, as it seemed, at our distress and aggravating our sufferings. If it had been dark we might have gone to sleep. But in many a disastrous chance she herself, with her treacherous fickle light, has been the prime agent. Were we not run away with down the steepest hill in the county, beause the dear cream-colour caught a glimpse of the moon shimmering and shivering in the deep pool by Brackham Common? And did not the same lamented steed carry us into the middle of a herd of deer in Talbot Park, because he took fright at the black shadow of an old oak that lay across the road like something real and tangible? And were we not fairly upset into a gravel-pit on Hartley Heath, one snowy Twelfth Night, owing again to those bright deceitful beams which made the false track seem like the true?

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Have we not missed our road through thee, false moon, oftener than tongue can tell? Were we not near driving into the Long Water at Eversley, because we took a pollard for a finger-post, and a holly bush for a milestone? Dost thou not make lane look like lane, and cottage like cottage, and wood like wood? And art thou not the only true *ignis fatuus?* Never am I taken in by the treacherous postscript to a country concert bill, "N. B. There will be a moon." Give me an honest darkness. Then one feels one's way, and finds it.

As, however, there is no rule without its exception, so I must admit that certain pleasant passages of my life have been connected with her Cynthian majesty, one of which is the subject of the present short story.

Several years ago I was on a visit to a distant relation of my mother's, a naval officer, at his beautiful seat in the New Forest. The good admiral, for such was his professional rank, a most hearty and jovial person, had no greater delight than that of assembling "troops of friends" at his hospitable mansion, and his house was, as usual, full of agreeable and well-chosen guests. By far the most striking of his inmates was his orphan ward, Jane Gordon, a rich heiress of high birth, and splendid connexions, who, although she had been for some months of age, and in full possession of her large estates in the north of England, still continued to reside with her kind guardian, to whom she looked up with the tender love of a grateful child towards an indulgent parent.

The dear old admiral was, as it seemed to me, the only man whom Jane Gordon was ever likely to regard with either love or reverence. Of a noble and commanding beauty, and a most stately and dignified deportment, she had, it was true, a general and queen-like courtesy and condescension towards all who approached her, but so mingled with a gentle reserve, and a high-bred coldness of manner, that her very polish served to repel familiarity, and to keep the boldest suitors at a distance. Amongst her female friends, however, (and I

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was fortunate enough to be included in the number,) she sometimes relaxed sufficiently to show that her mind was as high-toned and majestic as her person. I have seldom met with any one who had a wider reach of thought, a purer taste, a warmer heart, or a kinder temper. Her common demeanour was abundantly chilling, but her moments of confidence were enchanting. She resembled those northern springs, where, the moment that the snow melts away, leaves and flowers start up to succeed them.

Of these glimpses of sunshine, however, no gentleman, certainly no young gentleman, was ever permitted to share. Proposal after proposal had been rejected, and her good guardian, who, much as he valued her society, ardently wished to see her married, declared to me one day that he had made up his mind never again to advocate the cause of any of her lovers. "I verily believe," added he, "that the more the girl is courted, the more she sets herself against matrimony. It's the only thing in which she's perverse. But the moment I mention a young fellow to her as likely to make a good husband, from that instant she takes an aversion to him; so that for the future I shall let her have her own way. There's your favourite now, Charles Elliott, who has been staying here these two months; it's quite clear that he's dying for her; and what a fine noble fellow he is! How full of knowledge, and talent, and goodness! What a son, and brother, and friend, he has been all his life! and what a happy woman his wife would be! Yet she takes no more notice of Charles Elliott than of my old crutch! He asked me yesterday to second his proposals; but I told him frankly that he had my best wishes, but that I was tired of recommending suitors, and should take a special care not to mention his name. I' faith, last time I spoke to her on the subject, (it was about Sir Thomas Hanley, some three months ago,) she implored me to spare her such discourses, and look upon her as devoted to a single life. Elliott would have as fair a chance of tempt-

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ing a nun from her cloister as of winning Jane Gordon." And with an air of affectionate vexation, the worthy veteran walked away.

It was on the evening succeeding this conversation, that Jane Gordon, who had excused herself, on the score of indisposition, from accompanying the admiral and most of his visitors to dine at the house of a neighbouring nobleman, having besought me to remain and keep her company, beguiled me into taking a moonlight walk into the forest. We were the only persons left at home, for Mr. Elliott had at breakfast-time announced his intention of riding out for the day to visit a harum-scarum friend of his, who was also staying in the neighbourhood; so that Miss Gordon, who had not made her excuses until half-an-hour before the admiral and his party set off for their dinner engagement, felt herself perfectly secure from intrusion and interruption in her ramble. She had been all day silent and languid, far less stately than usual, and somewhat less calm, but infinitely more charming, softer, sweeter, tenderer, more feminine, than I had ever seen her even in her happiest moments. She seemed to me less ill than agitated, and I could not help saying, "Has any thing vexed you, Jane? Can I be of any use to you?" And she hesitated and sighed out "No,"—whilst her countenance and manner said most plainly yes.

She was not, however, a person to be questioned, even if I had been disposed to force a reluctant confidence; and taking for granted that the worthy old admiral (a professed matchmaker) had, in spite of his professions, been worrying her on the score of Charles Elliott, or some other of her lovers, and that her embarrassment and low spirits proceeded from that cause, I followed the bent of her humour, and walked with her silently through the grounds into the forest.

The day had been oppressively warm, one of the rare hot days of an English summer, and was succeeded by a fresh and fragrant dewiness, which fell like balm upon the spirits. We

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wandered on, through brake and brier, threading the intricacies of the beautiful woodland paths, which lay in delicious repose in the bright moonlight, until at last she left the open tracks, and edged herself by ways to which she, as an inhabitant, was familiar, through the thick entanglement of underwood, until we reached a very small opening, quite walled in by hawthorn and holly bushes, and shaded by a noble beech, the roots of which formed, she said, her favourite seat. There we sat down, and were falling gradually into a subdued tone of conversation, well suited to the scene and the hour, when all on a sudden we heard the rapid steps and louder talking of men on the other side of the thicket, and immediately recognised the deep mellow tones of Mr. Elliott, and the gay blithe voice of his light-hearted companion, Captain Morland. I was about to propose to join them, or, at least, to call to them to join us in our snug and, whilst we chose to make it so, undiscoverable retreat, when the strong and agitated compression of Miss Gordon's hand on my arm, whilst she laid the fore-finger of her other hand on her lip, restrained me, and kept me an undesigned and unwilling listener to the following conversation, during which she contrived, by the most supplicating gestures, and by the most imploring pressure of my hand, to keep me as entirely and almost breathlessly silent as herself.* I shall put down the dialogue just as we heard it through the impervious leafy wall, that alone parted us from the speakers, of whom Captain Morland was for some minutes incomparably the most loquacious.

Mor. What a night, and what scenery! Was ever vapour so soft, so transparent, and so silvery, as those small clouds that flit about the moon? And the edges of light which sur-

* As this is the third time during this little volume that I have appeared in the very equivocal character of an over-hearer, I think it only due to my personal reputation to assure the courteous reader, that on all these occasions the occurrence was purely accidental, and that I am as far from being an habitual listener as any she in the world.

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round the larger and darker masses, how bright and how beautiful are they! Did you ever see a lovelier sky?

Ell. Very lovely.

Mor. Then the effect of the moon-beams on this forest glade! How they sleep on that broad oak, and dance in the tiny rivulet, that wells from amidst the convolved and snaky roots, and goes winding and gurgling along the turf like a thing of life! And how the shining bark of the weeping birch stands out like a stem of silver, whilst the delicate branches, as they flutter in the night breeze, cast a tremulous and glancing shadow on the ground beneath! Is it not beautiful?

Ell. Eh?—Yes; I believe so.

Mor. You believe so!—And see how the holly leaves glitter above the tall fern, which waves round us in such wild profusion—a lower forest! Is it not enchanting? And that deep shadowy perspective, the intricacy, the involution, the mystery, which makes so much of the charm and the character of forest scenery. You don't enjoy it, Elliott! You, whom I have heard declaim for an hour together on a pollard by the side of a pond, or an elm tree overhanging a rustic bridge, or any such common-place picturesqueness; and here's a piece of fairy land that sets even such a rattlepate as I am exclaiming, and when one asks you if it be beautiful, you say, I believe so! Only look at that cluster of glow-worms—Elliott, what can you be thinking of? I know that you are in love. But your true lover is ever a lover of nature; basks in the moonshine, and revels in the forest. It is his proper atmosphere. What can you be thinking of?

Ell. Simply, my dear Morland, that however delightful this place may be, it would be still more delightful if one of the fairies you talk of would have the goodness to guide us home again. For, in my humble opinion, we are lost.

Mor. Never fear.

> "I know each glade, and every alley green
> Dingle and bosky dell———"

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By Jove, Elliott, you are right! I thought we had come back to the great oak, from which the avenue branches, which leads us straight to Kinley Lodge. It's just such a tree. But there is no spring welling out from the roots of the Kinley oak.

Ell. Neither is there any sign of an avenue here. Nor, indeed, as far as I can see, of any path whatsoever. We edged ourselves, if you remember, through one of these thickets. I think that to the left.

Mor. No: this to the right. I think to the right. Never mind. We are lost. Take the matter quietly, man, instead of wandering about in that disconsolate manner, frightening the birds from their nests, by beating the bushes, and treading upon the poor pretty glow-worms and putting out their lamps. Be peaceable. I shall have the worst of the adventure, inasmuch as I shall certainly get disinherited by my good aunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Morland, for keeping bad hours whilst an inmate of her mansion, or rather for staying out all night (for we shall hardly get back before morning) in, as she will truly assert, bad company; for worse company than you at present, I think, can hardly be found. If the fair Jane Gordon were to see you in this mood!

Ell. Are you sure, Morland, that you have lost your way?

Mor. Certain. But what need you mind? You have no maiden aunt to look after your false steps—you are a mere guest of the good admiral's—nobody to take care of you, nobody to lecture you, nobody to rave if you sleep out twenty nights; whilst I——

Ell. And you really think that we shan't get home before morning?

Mor. Morning! I rather apprehend that we shall never get home at all. I don't imagine that we shall find our way out; and I doubt, even if any one thinks it worth while to look after us, whether he will find his way in, though, I take it, the forest is the last wilderness in which we shall be sought for. Mrs. Elizabeth is far more likely to have us cried in the

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next town, or to advertise us in the London papers, under the head "missing," with our names and marks, like two stray pointers.

Ell. Do, pray, be serious.

Mor. Certainly. It is a most grave subject. Twenty years hence, perhaps, we may turn up in the shape of the remains of two unfortunate gentlemen, who——

Ell. Hark! Is that a clock?

Mor. It's an owl, the clock of the forest.

Ell. Morland, I beseech you, leave jesting. If you could but imagine how important it is to me to reach Kinley by a certain time! Can you guess at the hour?

Mor. My repeater will tell us. *(Strikes his watch.)*— Half-past ten.

Ell. Gracious Heaven! my prospects are ruined for ever! I am a wretch for life! the most miserable of wretches! he who might have been the happiest.

Mor. That tone is too genuine and too passionate to be trifled with. But how, my dear Elliott, can this little difficulty, which must end with the night, affect your happiness?

Ell. You know Jane Gordon?

Mor. Yes! yes! and your passion for her. All the world knows that, the proud beauty herself included. But she is so nice, and so coy, and so high, and so cold. What of Jane Gordon?

Ell. We are staying, you know, in the same house; and this morning I ventured, for the first time, to put my love for her into words.

Mor. Ay! And she listened?

Ell. Yes; she, the coy, the haughty Jane Gordon, listened and blushed, and stood awhile in abashed silence, then turned slowly away; and when I seized her hand and pressed for an answer, faltered that she was going out with her guardian, but should be back by eleven; and then she broke from me. And not to meet her! she, the dear, the charming, the beautiful

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Jane Gordon! the admired of all eyes! the coveted of all tongues! the beloved of all hearts! she to have made such a concession! And if you had but heard the tone! if you had but seen the blush! if you could image to yourself how divinely her unusual softness became the coy beauty! And to fail her now!

Mor. You shall *not* fail her. I *will* find the way. How in the name of Heaven came you to be wandering in the forest on such a night?

Ell. Why, I went to spend the day with you to beguile the hours. And you yourself proposed that we should walk back to Kinley, and promised to be my guide.

Mor. But to trust such a guide as I was likely to prove! And on such an occasion! Never mind, though, my good fellow! I *will* find the way. And, depend on it, since Jane Gordon likes you well enough to have made this half appointment, that you'll be the happy man whether you keep it or not. But I'll find the way. I'll be sure to find the way. We must set about it now in good earnest. To the right! I am sure to the right.

At this point the voices ceased, and the hasty foot-steps which had at first mingled with the sound of crashing branches as Captain Morland, followed by his friend, forced his way through a thicket, luckily in an opposite direction from that in which we lay concealed, gradually receded, and at last totally ceased. We still remained in motionless silence. Jane, whose situation reminded me a little of that of Beatrice in the arbour, trembling and breathless, delighted yet ashamed; and I revolving with some amusement the fixed resolves of one-and-twenty, and the good admiral's knowledge of women. At last, when quite sure that the gentlemen were fairly out of hearing, and could not by possibility repay us in our own coin by listening to our discourse, she could restrain her emotion no longer, but fell on my neck in a passion of tears, sobbing out, "my friend! my own dear friend!"

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"Well, dearest?"

"What can you think of me?"

"I think you a wise woman. You could not have made a better choice."

"But my guardian?"

"He'll be enchanted. He told me only this very morning that he believed you'd live and die in single blessedness. A protestant nun I think he called you."

"Oh! what will he think of me?"

"He'll be delighted, I tell you. Sailors are not, to be sure, remarkable for their knowledge of female character; but do you think he never heard before of a woman's changing her mind?"

"And Charles Elliott himself?"

"Nay, you heard what he said on the subject; and if you have a mind to hear what he has to say further, I advise you to make haste home, for they'll certainly be back before us. Come, dearest!"

"Oh! I never can see him this evening."

"But at all events we must get home. Did ever mortal creep so slowly? Walk faster, love!"

"You'll keep my counsel, then? You promise to keep my counsel?"

"Ay, dearest, as long as it shall be necessary." And she pressed my hand, and we walked home in silence. And I have more than kept my word. For though the parties have been married these half dozen years, I defy Mrs. Charles Elliott to say that I ever breathed a syllable of our moonlight adventure to man or woman till now, that I whisper it as a profound secret to that most safe and discreet confidant, my singular good friend the public.

THE END.

LONDON: W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

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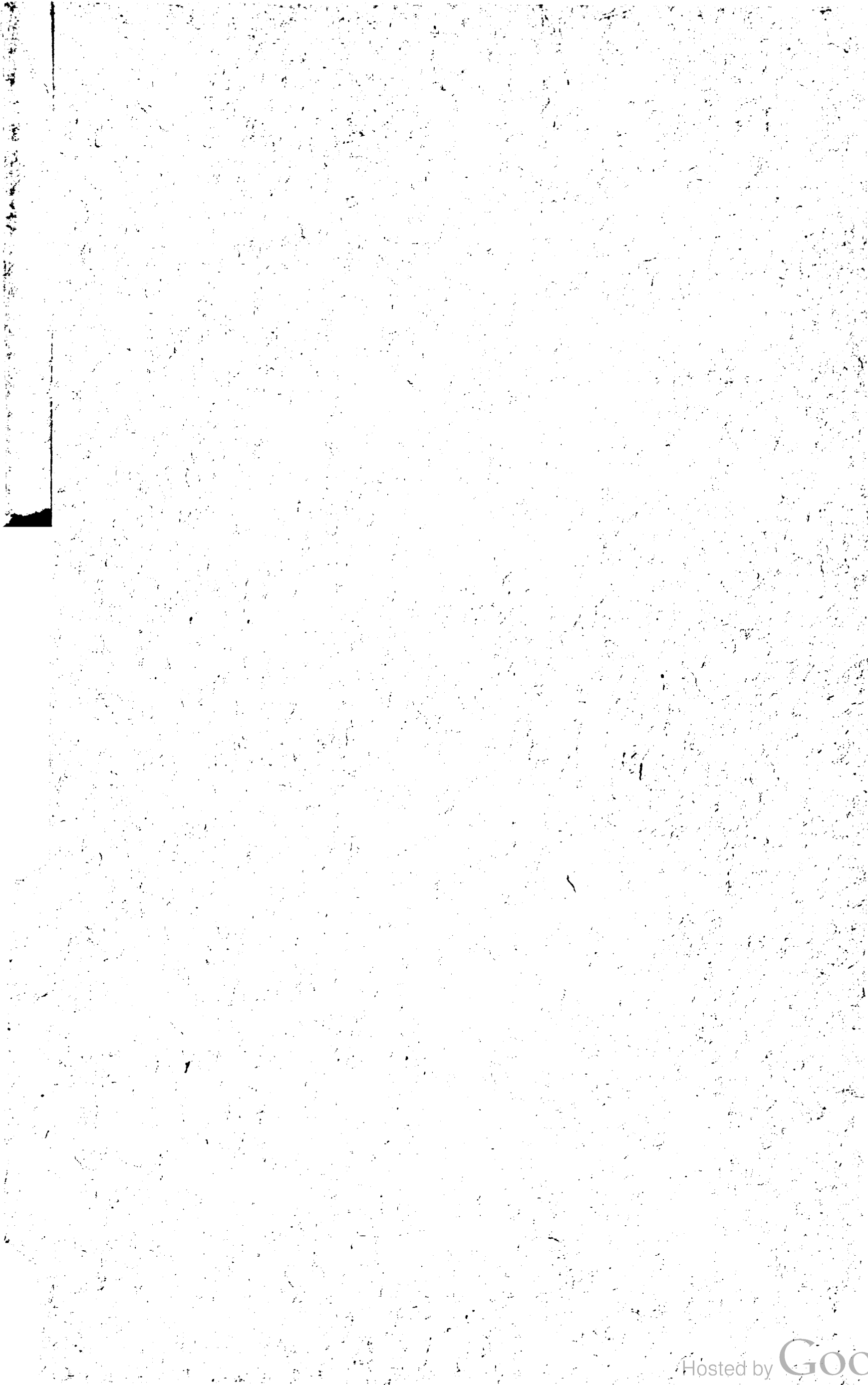

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